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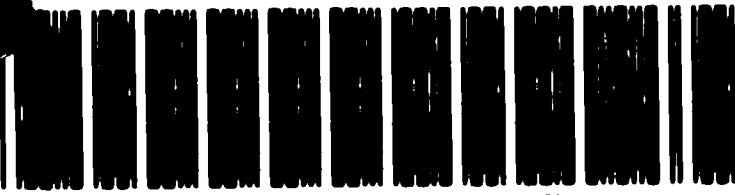
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PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE

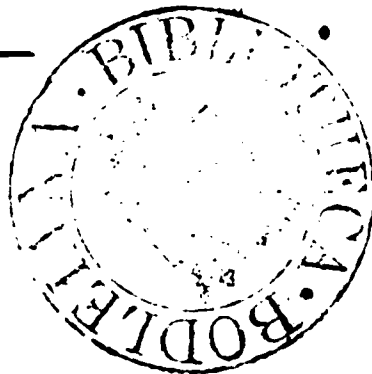
BOOK OF PSALMS,

(The Prayer-Book Version,)

CHIEFLY FOUNDED ON THE FATHERS.

VOLUME I.,

CONTAINING PSALMS I.—LXXII.



OXFORD AND LONDON:

JOHN HENRY AND JAMES PARKER.

M DCCC LVII.

PRINTED BY MESSRS. PARKER, CORN-MARKET, OXFORD.

TO THE FAITHFUL LAITY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,

AND, AMONG THEM, ESPECIALLY TO

HENRY HOARE, Esq., M.A.,

CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE REVIVAL OF CONVOCATION, &c.,

WHOSE EARNEST PERSEVERANCE IN THE BEHALF OF CHURCH

EFFICIENCY, AND WHOSE READINESS IN ALL CHARITABLE

WORKS, ARE AN EXAMPLE TO ENGLISH CHURCHMEN,

This Plain Commentary on the Psalms

IS INSCRIBED, WITH THE WISH AND THE PRAYER

THAT IT MAY BE FOUND USEFUL.

P R E F A C E.

It has appeared to me for some time past, that a Commentary of a plain and simple, and yet spiritual, character, upon the Book of Psalms, was really needed in our Church. There seemed to be many persons to whom such a Commentary would be very useful.

'The young deacon, or curate, for instance, when he first begins his parochial visiting, and has to read portions of Scripture to the aged and infirm, will naturally, next to the Gospels, take the Psalms for his continuous readings. Their character, which is at once so deeply evangelical, practical, and devotional, puts them forward as the most profitable for systematic reading. But unless he has made the Psalms a subject of especial study, he will certainly come upon verses which he will find it hard to give the meaning of to a poor and unlearned parishioner, in an easy and yet edifying way. Such verses, experience has shewn me, will generally be passed over, as being likely to interrupt the current of devotional feelings, and to turn the conversation of the minister and the

parishioner from spiritual things to mere explanations of difficulties. A Plain Commentary, therefore,—which might be readily used by themselves, and be left with their aged parishioners for reading after they had left them,—would be an advantage, and often no small one, to clergymen in their parish work.

And it would be a still more obvious advantage and assistance to those Churchmen and Churchwomen who, under the guidance and advice of their parish priest, devote themselves, wholly or partially, as district visitors, to looking after the wants of the poor; and who are entrusted by their clergyman with the privilege of reading to them the Scriptures, or the writings of holy and religious men, under his superintendence. A simple exposition of the Psalms, in their spiritual character, and a setting out of the Christian doctrine contained in them, could not but be a great help to such persons in their work of charity.

But there are other and much larger classes of Church-people, to whom a Plain Commentary on the Psalms would be highly useful;—I mean those who, in conformity with the Church's rule, read every day the Psalms for the day, or a portion of them, at their family prayers, or in their

own private devotions. When the Psalms for the day are read at family prayers, certain verses, and even entire Psalms, are constantly recurring,—as, for instance, Psalm cix.,—to the full meaning of which, those who join in them have no direct spiritual clue, and which, therefore, jar upon their feelings, and make the reciting them—unless they are, on individual responsibility, systematically omitted—an act of some difficulty, or at least not an act of devotion. The case is the same, sometimes in a greater, sometimes a less degree, with Christians in their private devotions. Here a guide to the true meaning of those parts of the Psalms which they do not perfectly understand, would be a very great gain. And it would also be so to all who join regularly in the morning and evening public Services of the Church. The Psalter occupies a large place in our Matins and Evensong; and they who would obtain the full blessing given to those who unite with their fellow-Christians in the Services of God's Church, must not be content merely with feeling a devotional spirit; but must take every care that, in saying the prayers and spiritual songs which the Psalter puts into their mouths, they may fulfil the Apostle's injunction to those who assemble together in the

Sanctuary,—‘I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also’^a.

And it is especially to be desired that those younger members of the Church who, as choristers, are called to take a particular share in the public worship of God, whose work of chanting praise is peculiarly ‘angels’ work,’—it is especially to be desired that choristers should be taught early the full meaning and importance of those hallowed songs which they repeat so often. Care is taken to instruct the choristers of our churches in the other parts of Scripture, and certainly it should be particularly bestowed, that they may understand the meaning of the Psalms which they sing so constantly in the House and in the immediate presence of the Lord. ‘Understandest thou what thou singest?’ is for them, at least, a question as needful to be rightly answered as—‘Understandest thou what thou readest?’ For them a Plain Commentary—which should teach them to see their Lord Who loves them, in the Psalms no less than in the Gospels—seems also much required.

Having for some time borne these wants in

^a 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

mind, and having waited for some one better prepared for the work to undertake it, I at last determined to do what I could to supply them ; and the result has been the publication of the present Plain Commentary on the Psalms.

In writing this Commentary, I found that my great difficulty lay, not in the scarcity, but in the abundance of materials. The Psalms themselves are so full of deep and holy meanings, and they have suggested so many divine thoughts and heavenly musings to good men in all ages of the Church, that the labour was not one of collection, but of selection. I soon saw that if my Commentary was to be of much use, I must quite lay aside the larger plan upon which I had at first begun to work, and must bring it into as small a compass as might be. I have therefore omitted all critical dissertations upon the meanings of disputed passages, and have merely given that sense which, upon due comparison, appeared to be the best ;—I have omitted the references to the works of the Fathers, which would have been but of little use to those for whom the Commentary was intended ; and in many cases, where two or three different lines of spiritual interpretation have been given by the earlier commentators, I have

confined myself to the one which seemed most edifying, or most in accordance with the general tone of the whole. In doing this, I am no doubt open to many very just criticisms. It may be said, perhaps, that on Psalms which are in themselves very plain, more has been said than was needed; while in the case of others which are harder to understand, clearer and more probable explanations might have been given than those which are given. It is probable that it may be so; for the object I have always had in view was not to produce a work of literary perfection, which might stand the criticism of accomplished theologians, but only to bring before my reader, who might be poor, young, and unlearned, in plain, and even homely, language, some of the deep and mighty thoughts which the Psalms had suggested to St. Athanasius, to St. Chrysostom, to St. Augustine, to St. Jerome, and the holy men who followed in their track; and to leave these thoughts to work their own way by their own grandeur, their own power, their own truth, and their own beauty.

As this Commentary is professedly founded on the Fathers, a question may also arise in the minds of those who are acquainted only with the English translation of the Scriptures, as to why selected

passages of the Fathers could not in all cases have been given, without any additions or alterations, and thus a Catena have been formed which would have been a running Commentary in the very words of the Fathers. Those, however, who are acquainted with the writings of the Fathers, know that they followed always either the Greek version of the Seventy or the Latin Vulgate, both of which differ in very many places from the Hebrew, and from our translation, which is made directly from it; and that, therefore, if the words of the Fathers only had been taken, a very large proportion of the verses of the Psalms in our translation must have been left without any comment whatever. This is the difficulty which the writer of a Commentary on the Psalms has always to contend with—that while on plain passages there is a richness and copiousness of teaching which embarrasses him to select from, in those places of real difficulty where he is truly in need of an interpreter and helper, the Fathers cannot help him, because they comment always on the Greek and Latin versions, and not on the original Hebrew.

I have therefore, in this Commentary, followed in the footsteps of the earlier interpreters. I have taken their very words, wherever it was possible to do so;—in fact, a half of this Commentary at least is in the very words of the Fathers. But

where they left me to find my way alone, I naturally looked for help to the teachers of our own Church, particularly to the divines of the reigns of Charles I. and Charles II.; and whenever, in them or in other religious writers, I found an apt illustration or a pious thought which threw light upon a Psalm, I set it where it seemed best to stand. Still, all through, St. Augustine has been my chief guide: his Commentary, which is made up of his sermons on the Psalms, has been my constant model; and if at any time this Plain Commentary seem to be too like a sermon,—if I have sometimes preached as well as explained,—I can only say that St. Augustine has done the same, and that in many cases the words of exhortation and of warning are his.

The attempt, then, has been, not to make a perfect Commentary which should supersede all other Commentaries, but to write, or to gather from the best and holiest sources, such plain explanations, spiritual improvements, and interpretations, as should form a running Commentary upon the Psalms throughout,—a Commentary which any member of the Church of England, however young or unlearned, might take up, and after he had read it might feel that he knew somewhat more of the meaning and entered somewhat more into the spirit of any Psalm before him in his

Prayer-book, than he had been able to do before. It is for such readers to judge how far this has been accomplished in this Plain Commentary.

The Prayer-book version of the Psalms was obviously the best for the text of the Commentary, both on account of its own intrinsic majesty and beauty, and because the use of it is so familiar to Church-people in their devotions. Where it differs much from the Hebrew, a literal rendering of the original has been generally given, and translations from the Septuagint have also been added, wherever they were likely to give assistance in understanding the meaning of difficult passages.

I am indebted to the ability and the patient kindness of a very dear friend and brother in the priesthood for many striking thoughts and apt scriptural illustrations, as well as for a careful correction of the whole work throughout.

I end what I have said and done with an expression of hearty thanksgiving to Him through Whose assisting grace I have brought this work to its completion. He has blessed it to me in the writing it: may He in like manner bless it to others in the reading it! Amen.

For the use of those who wish to study the Psalms more thoroughly, the following list is given of some of the authors used in writing the "Plain Commentary:"—

Corderius, *Expositio Patrum Græcorum in Psalmos.*

St. Jerome, *Commentarius in Psalmos.*

St. Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms.*

Lorinus, *Commentarii in Psalmos.*

Titelmannus, *Elucidatio in omnes Psalmos.*

Bellarminus, *Explanatio in Psalmos.*

Molerus, *Enarratio Psalmorum.*

Calvin, *Commentarius in Librum Psalmorum.*

Luther, *Complete Commentary on the twenty-two first Psalms.*

De Sacy, *Les Pseaumes de David avec une Explication.*

Dr. Hammond, *Paraphrase of the Psalms.*

Bp. Horsley, *Translation of the Book of Psalms.*

Bp. Horne, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms.*

Dr. Tholuck, *A Translation and Commentary of the Book of Psalms.*

Dr. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms.*

Rev. J. Jebb, *Translation and Dissertation on the Psalms.*

Revs. French and Skinner, *Translation of the Psalms.*

Rev. F. H. Dunwell, *Parochial Lectures on the Psalms.*

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INTRODUCTION I.

§ 1. THE INSPIRATION OF THE PSALMS.

IN the Book of Psalms we have the Prayer-book of the Universal Church, written and set in order for us by the Holy Spirit of God Himself. The Psalms are the praises and the prayers for all men, every time, and under all circumstances; and every feeling of every heart which turns to the God of all flesh, and to the Saviour of all souls, can most readily find in them the words in which it may best set forth its cries of sorrow or of gladness, of heart-felt repentance or of heart-felt thanksgiving.

The Psalms are the inheritance both of the Jewish and of the Christian Church; and they descend from the one to the other unchanged, and without needing any change. The Law of Moses required the Gospel to make it complete; the proclamations and warnings of the Prophets are imperfect without the teachings and the revelations of the Apostles; the Old Testament without the New is but a part of the whole counsel of God respecting man;—but the Psalms alone seem to need nothing to complete them or to make them perfect. They

are the response to all the rest of Holy Scripture ; as if the Holy Spirit, by giving to us the other portions of the Bible, had bid us know that *thus* and *thus* hath God spoken to man, and by giving us the Book of Psalms had taught us that *thus* and *thus* must man reply to God. By the very operation of the Divine wisdom, by which these holy hymns were prepared for man's use, they are in a wonderful way fitted for all who make use of them. They belong to all mankind, because they are the outpourings of human hearts, conscious of weakness, of sorrow, of sin, but yet purified and hallowed by the Holy Spirit of Truth. This marvellous power of theirs, by which they adapt themselves to every soul, and through which every child of man, from the Lord of Glory Himself down to the poorest, the frailest, the most erring finds in them that form of prayer in which he can best cry to God, seems to arise from this union in them of what is truly human with what is truly divine. Thus they are not for one generation only, but for all mankind. Time and place are nothing to the Spirit of God ; they make no difference in His workings ; and therefore the sorrow of David, mourning for his sin, is all one with the sorrow of the repenting sinner now ; and the gladness of David, strong in his faith, is all one with the holy gladness of the believer now. Man's needs, and sins, and troubles are the same in all ages ; God's love, and holiness, and mercy are the same in all ages ; and so the Church now, and each soul within the Church, can unite in the very same cry of prayer, or voice of

praise, not only with 'the glorious company of the Apostles,' but with 'the goodly fellowship of the Prophets' too. The words of David and of the other Psalmists were their own, because they came from their own souls; and yet they were not their own, because they were moved to utter them by the Holy Ghost, Which rested on them and dwelt within them. The Psalms, though full of acknowledgment of human infirmity and of confessions of sin, are a portion of inspired Scripture. They are cited as such by the Apostles in the New Testament more than any other portion of the older Scriptures; they are declared to be a part of the Scripture 'which cannot be broken' by the Son of God Himself. David knew that his thoughts and words were those of the Holy Ghost, when he gave them utterance; for he said of himself,—'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue^a.' And the Saviour confirms his declaration by saying in the temple, before the scribes, 'For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand^b.' And St. Peter uses the very same words, declaring before the Apostles that 'the Scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas^c.' The Psalmist, therefore, did not only then speak by the Spirit when he prophesied things to be hereafter, when he knew that Christ should not be left in Hades, but that He should sit upon the right hand of God; he was not merely inspired when he

^a 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.^b St. Mark xii. 36.^c Acts i. 16.

spake what man could not, in the course of nature, possibly speak; but he was inspired by the very same Spirit when he spake the things which man, when touched by grace, can speak, ought to speak, must speak. The Holy Ghost is first and before all the Author of the Psalms; and they who cry to their God and Father from the footstool of this lower world in the words of the Psalms, are uttering the very words of the Holy Spirit; and so do they cry in union with Him Who in the highest heaven 'maketh intercession for the elect with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

§ 2. THE WRITERS OF THE PSALMS.

THE Psalms are called in the Hebrew 'the Book of Praises.' This term of 'Praises or Praise-songs,' the Greek interpreters rendered by the word 'Psalms,' meaning by a Psalm, a hymn recited to music; and they called the whole book 'the Psalter,' as if it were itself the Psalter or instrument to which praises were to be sung. They are often called the 'Psalms of David,' because an impression prevailed in the minds of some of the Fathers of the early Church, that all of these hymns of praise and prayer were composed by David. This was the opinion both of St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, among earlier writers, and has been asserted by Calvin in later times: but there is no ground for it, and the fact that many of the Psalms refer to the captivity in Babylon, and the return, sets it aside. Other

writers, including the best modern biblical critics, follow St. Hilary, St. Athanasius, and St. Jerome, in considering that David composed those Psalms which the titles declare to be his, and in assigning the other Psalms to such authors as are named in the titles, or can be supposed to have been inspired to write them from indications furnished by the Psalms themselves. The ancient Rabbis and the learned men among the Jews seem also to be agreed that the titles are of an historical character.

These titles or superscriptions of the Psalms are certain short sentences which are set before several, though not all, of these sacred songs; and they sometimes express the character of the hymn, as 'a Praise-song,' 'a Prayer,' 'a joyful Song,' 'an Instruction,' 'an Inscription,' 'a Song of the goings-up;' sometimes they declare that the Psalm was intended for the service of the temple, by prefixing the words 'for the Chief Musician,' adding, in some cases, the season when it was to be used, as in the words, 'for the Sabbath-day;' and sometimes they mention the tune to which the Psalm was to be chanted, or the musical instrument which was to accompany it; and sometimes they assign some historical event for the occasion of the Psalm being written, as 'the Philistines taking David in Gath,' or 'the prophet Nathan coming to him, after his sin with Bathsheba.' The most important service, however, which the titles perform, is that they point out certain kings and prophets as the authors of particular Psalms; and in doing so they not only gratify our curiosity,

by informing us who wrote this or that Psalm, and under what circumstances he wrote it; but they also considerably help us, in very many instances, to understand the meaning and the object of the Psalm itself. The question, therefore, of the degree of authority which is to be allowed to these superscriptions, is one which requires to be considered. Some writers have argued that they are but of late date, and therefore that they can have little authority; but the contrary opinion is a far more probable one. We know that these superscriptions existed in the time of the Seventy Interpreters, for they always give translations of them: judging from the scrupulous care with which the Jews preserved the text of their holy books from changes or additions, we may safely conclude that the titles had stood before the Psalms, just as they now stand, from the times of Ezra or of the Great Synagogue; and a careful comparison of them with corresponding passages in the Books of Samuel, will make it nearly certain that they were affixed to the Psalms which bear them at their first composition, by their inspired writers; and, in fact, are each of them a portion—generally a first verse—of the original Psalm. If the titles, therefore, are authentic, as there is every reason for believing them to be, we shall find in them much very useful information respecting the authors of the Psalms, and the occasions on which they were composed; and also in many cases we shall see that the title throws much light upon the Psalm itself. There are, however, many Psalms

which have no titles, and these are supposed by the Jewish Rabbis, and also by St. Jerome, to be written by the author of the Psalm which precedes them; but arguments arising from this supposition must be received in each case with considerable caution.

The inspired writers of the Psalms lived during a period of about a thousand years. The earliest of the Psalms is supposed by Dr. Lightfoot to be the 88th, and to have been written by Heman, the son of Zerah, during the captivity in Egypt; and this opinion seems strongly confirmed by the internal evidence, though it cannot be considered as certain. The 90th Psalm, which is inscribed ‘a Prayer of Moses, the man of God,’ is almost universally acknowledged to have been written by Moses in the wilderness, about B.C. 1489; and the Psalm which follows it was very probably also the work of the great Lawgiver. Some few of the Psalms which contain no reference to Mount Zion or to Jerusalem, might have been written during the time of the Judges and of Samuel. But by far the larger half of the whole the Church owes to David, the Prophet-King of Judah and of Israel, ‘the sweet Psalmist of Israel.’ Seventy-four of the Psalms are inscribed with his name in the Hebrew, and a still greater number in the LXX.; and nearly all of these bear the plain impress of the spirit of ‘the man after God’s own heart.’ His troubles, sorrows, fears; his affection, courage, faith; his intense penitence and self-abasement; his boundless joy and exultation have but one end and object—God, Whom he knew to be his

Saviour and Defender. All the things of nature,—its loveliness, its still repose, its storms and awfulness; all the chances and changes of human life,—and the experience of David in these was wide indeed; all that music and poetry can touch the feelings and excite the spirit by;—all these were to David but mere means to lead his soul to God on Whose love and righteousness he reposed, and to make the love and righteousness of God more real to himself. His Psalms give the inner history of his soul as truly and faithfully as the historical books record the outer history of his life and of his kingdom: they contain his personal experience set forth without disguise; and therefore they have become in all ages the expression of the trust and love of the Church, and of all holy souls within her. Two Psalms, the 72nd and the 127th, are written by Solomon, and, with the Book of Canticles, are all that remain of the thousand and five songs which he wrote. The tone of these Psalms is calm and majestic, but they lack the passionate, earnest emotions of David his father. Twelve Psalms have in their titles the name of Asaph for their author. It seems clear that there were two Psalmists, at least, who bore this name. The elder Asaph appears to have lived in the time of David, and is mentioned with him in the narrative of Nehemiah^d: ‘For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.’ The younger Asaph is supposed to have

^d Nehem. xii. 46.

lived during the reign of Hezekiah and his predecessors, and to be spoken of in Scripture as Asaph the Seer. We find in the history of the reformation of religion made by Hezekiah^e,—‘Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the Seer.’ The Psalms which are inscribed with the name of Asaph are, for the most part, of a solemn and thoughtful, and somewhat stern, character, like the words of a prophet that would lead a people back to righteousness. They have little or no reference to the Psalmist’s own hopes or sorrows, but are generally taken up with the thoughts of his Church and nation, and the dealings of their God with them. Eleven more of the Psalms are assigned by their superscriptions to the sons of Korah. These were the Levites who were descended from that Korah who perished in the wilderness; they appear to have devoted themselves to psalmody and music, and among them, and under the instruction of Samuel, who was one of them, it is likely that David obtained that love for sacred poesy, and that knowledge of sacred music, for which he was distinguished from his very youth: and this early connection and friendship between David and the family of Korah was not without its fruits; for in the time of his adversity several of the Korhites came to Ziklag as his soldiers and allies^f. The Psalms of the sons of Korah were composed at various periods, from the reign of David to the cap-

• 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

^f 1 Chron. xii. 6.

tivity; but perhaps the greater number during the reign of Jehoshaphat, and during the desolation of the temple, and the banishment of the priests and Levites in the time of Ahaz. These Psalms have all the tenderness and longing piety of those of David, with more of poetic beauty and melody of language, but less of personal feeling and personal faith. None of the children of Korah returned from the captivity. The Psalm of Heman has already been spoken of, and but little can be known of Ethan the Ezrahite, or 'the sojourner,' who was the author of Psalm lxxxix.

The other Psalms have no names prefixed to them in the Hebrew, and their writers can only be gathered from conjecture. It is extremely probable that Ezra was the writer of Psalm cxix., and also of the first Psalm, which stands as an introduction to the whole book; and it is not unlikely that Josiah composed Psalm cii. Jeremiah, Haggai, and Zechariah are given by the Seventy Interpreters as writers of certain Psalms; but we can assign but little weight to the titles of the LXX. where they differ from the Hebrew.

The Psalms were at an early period divided into five books;—the result, probably, of the order in which they were originally composed. The first of these books consists of the Psalms of David himself, which were probably collected and arranged by him in the order in which they now stand. The second and third books were collected and arranged, there is reason for believing, at different periods in the

reign of Hezekiah, and they contain the Psalms of Asaph and the Korhites, with the addition of some written by David, which are chiefly found in the second book. The fourth book has been supposed to have been collected in the reign of Josiah, and contains the Psalm of Moses, and others probably of high antiquity, but chiefly without titles. The fifth and last book was compiled, probably, by Ezra, and contains the Psalms composed during and after the captivity, with the addition of those Psalms of David which still remained known, but had not been before collected.

§ 3. THE POETRY OF THE PSALMS.

IF by poetry we mean that power of expression or quality of language which stirs up exalted feelings in our minds, and sets before them thoughts of wonder, of joy, of sorrow, of terror, in which they are compelled to sympathize; and by so doing purifies them, and raises up above their usual level to what is more beautiful and true,—then there is no doubt but that the Psalms are full of poetry. There is scarcely any one image of what is grand, or lovely, or terrible in nature; or any one feeling of what is joyful, or sorrowful, or longing, or fearing, or hoping, or trusting in the human heart, that does not rise before us as we go through those holy and ancient hymns. The risings and settings of the sun, the clear brightness of the moon, the unfathomableness of the heaven above, the countless multitude of the

stars, the vivid blaze of lightnings, the terrible voice of thunders, the horror of earthquakes, the swiftness of winds, the cheerfulness of showers of rain, the tender freshness of dews,—all these appeal to our sympathies with nature, and have new force given to their appeal by the clear-shewn consciousness in the poet's own soul, that they are the loving work and mighty operation of the Father of all. Again: all that there is in the order of human society that is striking, or impressive, or pity-moving; the authority of kings, the prowess of warriors, the glory of crowns, the glitter of swords, the renown of courage, the pomp of victory, the quietness of the sheepfold, the gentle care of the shepherd, the sorrow of the captive, the bitterness of oppression, the fearfulness of death, the gloom of the grave;—and again, all the holiness and grandeur of religious worship, the awfulness of the Priesthood, the sanctity of the temple of God, the cry of prayer, the expiation of sacrifices, the joy of music, the chant of psalms, the tears of repentance, the rapture of inspiration, the hope of life immortal;—with all these, and many more such-like images, the Psalms are most richly stored. They are, in this respect, poetical in the highest degree.

But the Psalms are also poetical in the other sense of the word *Poetry*. Not only are they full of the spirit of poetry, but their form and language is also strictly poetical. They are written in the regular metre of ancient Hebrew poetry,—a metre wonderfully and indeed providentially fitted for the purpose which it has fulfilled. This metre is that which is

now generally known by the name of Parallelism : it is a metre or regular arrangement, not of words merely, but of thoughts also ; which is formed by a responding or answering to one another, not of syllables, as in modern English rhymes, but of thoughts and things. We may explain this by taking at random the modern translation of verses 8 and 9 of the 72nd Psalm :—

His uncontrolled dominion shall from sea to sea extend ;
Begin at proud Euphrates' streams, at nature's limits end.
To him the savage nations round shall bow their servile heads ;
His vanquished foes shall lick the dust, where He His conquest spreads.

Now let these lines, which are rendered into modern metre, be compared with the same lines, translated tolerably closely from the original Hebrew, in our Prayer-book version :—

His dominion shall be also from the one sea to the other,
And from the flood unto the world's end.
They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before Him ;
His enemies shall lick the dust.

The modern metre, it is plain at once, is formed by the number of syllables being defined, and by the rhyming of certain words ending with similar sounds, as 'crowned,' and 'abound,' 'extend' and 'end;' but the ancient metre rhymes, if we may so use the term, with words, not of a similar sound, but of a similar meaning : 'from-the-one-sea-to-the other' is placed to match with 'unto-the-world's-end;' and again, 'shall-kneel-before-him,' in one line, is made to correspond with 'shall-lick-the-dust' in the one that follows it. Again, another law of this an-

cient poetry is, that it does not require, like modern poetry, a certain number of syllables,—as ten or eight,—but rather a certain definite number of thoughts, ideas, or things. There are generally three in each line, as in the following verses of Psalm cxxxvii. :—

But-the-meek-spirited shall-possess the-earth,
And-shall-be-refreshed in-the-multitude of-peace.
The-ungodly seeketh-counsel against-the-just,
And-gnasheth upon-him with-his-teeth.
The-Lord shall-laugh him-to-scorn;
For-He-hath-seen that-his-day is-coming.

But these thoughts or words are sometimes more in number than three; and they are occasionally less: the case generally being, that the lines in the older Hebrew poems are more clearly marked with the threefold division, while the poems of later times admit of changes in the order of the lines, which are of greater or less lengths; and when they are of equal lengths, they contain a greater number of ideas, or distinct thoughts, in each line; of which we have examples in the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah.

The form, then, of the poetry of the Psalms, is that which is usual in all Hebrew poetry, and is called Parallelism; and the simplest kind of it is an arrangement of two lines, consisting generally of three thoughts each, in correspondence with each other. The original form of this peculiar kind of metre was, perhaps, derived from that parallelism, or correspondence, which a devout soul perceives to exist in all the creation of God, between the things

seen and unseen, and which Jesus, the son of Sirach, describes in the Book of Ecclesiasticus xxxiii. 15,—

So look upon all the works of the Most High :

And there are two and two, one against another ;—

and which is at the bottom of the teaching of all of our Lord's parables. The two things, the thing expressing and the thing expressed, exist together side by side in fact ; and so they fall, by a natural process, side by side, in the poetry that describes them. Psalm ciii., verses 11—13, will furnish an example of this :—

For look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth,
So great is His mercy also toward them that fear Him.
Look how wide also the east is from the west,
So far hath He set our sins from us.
Yea, like as a Father pitieth his own children,
Even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him.

This thought-metre, or parallelism, is of several kinds, more or less complicated and skilfully arranged. The simplest is that which is called 'Synonymous, or Cognate parallelism,' where there are two lines corresponding to each other, expressing nearly the same sentiment, but in different words ; as, for instance, Psalm xxvi. 4, 5 :—

I have not dwelt with vain persons,
Neither will I have fellowship with the deceitful :
I have hated the congregation of the wicked,
And will not sit among the ungodly.

Or, again, Psalm l. 10, 11 :—

For all the beasts of the forest are Mine,
And so are the cattle upon a thousand hills.
I know all the fowls upon the mountains,
And the wild beasts of the field are in My sight.

In 'Constructive parallelism' the same form lines answering to each other in the number of the verse-members is preserved, but the meaning of the is not the same, as in Psalm cxlviii. 7—12:—

Praise the Lord upon earth :
Ye dragons, and all deeps ;
Fire and hail, snow and vapours :
Wind and storm, fulfilling His word ;
Mountains and all hills :
Fruitful trees and all cedars ;
Beasts and all cattle :
Worms and feathered fowls ;
Kings of the earth and all people :
Princes and all judges of the world ;
Young men and maidens,
Old men and children,
Praise the Name of the Lord :
For His Name only is excellent,
And His praise above heaven and earth.

Another kind of parallelism is 'Antithetic parallelism,' in which the two lines are opposed to each other in meaning, as in Psalm xx. 7, 8:—

Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses :
But we will remember the Name of the Lord our God.
They are brought down, and fallen :
But we are risen, and stand upright.

These various parallelisms admit of many arrangements of the most various and beautiful descriptive lines that are parallel to one another are often separated by other lines that are also parallels, and are placed in different situations, so as to increase the poetical power of the expression, and the beauty

the arrangement of the verse. In fact, there is no limit to the complicated variety of which Hebrew poetry is capable, and of many of the most musical and striking of which we have examples in the Psalms. Psalm lxiii., arranged so as to shew the parallelism of the lines, will offer an example of this ancient kind of poetry:—

O God, Thou art my God : early will I seek Thee.

My soul thirsteth for Thee,

My flesh also longeth after Thee :

In a barren and dry land where no water is.

Thus have I looked for Thee in holiness :

That I might behold Thy power and glory.

For Thy loving-kindness is better than the life itself :

My lips shall praise Thee.

As long as I live will I magnify Thee on this manner :

And lift up my hands in Thy Name.

My soul shall be satisfied,

Even as it were with marrow and fatness :

When my mouth raiseth Thee with joyful lips.

Have I not remembered Thee in my bed :

And thought upon Thee when I was waking ?

Because Thou hast been my Helper :

Therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.

My soul hangeth upon Thee :

Thy right hand hath upholden me.

These also that seek the hurt of my soul :

They shall go under the earth.

Let them fall upon the edge of the sword :

That they may be a portion for foxes.

But the King shall rejoice in God ;

All they also that swear by Him shall be commended :

For the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

The most wonderful feature in this parallelistic metre is that the poetry written in it can be trans-

lated into any language, without the slightest injury to its poetic structure. We know how much English poetry loses by being translated into a foreign language, and how much all poetry—whether the verse of the ancient Greeks and Romans, or of the metrical writers of modern times—loses by being translated into English. If it be done literally, the poetical form and the beauty of the language is entirely lost, and only the poetical sentiment or flow of thought remains. But this is not at all the case with the poetry of the Bible; for as it consists altogether in the arrangement and order of the thoughts, and does not depend upon the mere words, its poetry is inseparable from itself, and it may be translated into any language without losing any of its peculiar beauty; and the more literally and strictly it is translated, the more perfectly is the original melody and beauty of its arrangement preserved. Thus the Holy Spirit seems to have chosen for His inspirations a true and real poetry, of which all poetry that depends on words and languages is but the imitation and the shadow; and so the Holy Scriptures would appear to be providentially adapted for translation into all tongues and languages, among all nations, without losing anything of their original poetic and metrical beauty.

The Hebrew word which is translated ‘a Psalm’ signifies, literally, a poem ‘cut into lengths, and pruned into due order,’ or in other words, one in which the verse-members are nicely balanced and regularly arranged according to the laws of Paral-

leistic poetry. This is often marked in addition by each line beginning with a letter of the alphabet in order, of which several of the Psalms, including Psalm cxix., afford examples. And when the poem was completed the writer affixed to it a title, expressing either some peculiar characteristic of the poem itself, or else the tune to which it was to be chanted. Thus certain of the Psalms have the titles of 'The lily of the covenant,' 'The hind of the morning,' 'Destroy not;' and in direct imitation of this, we find the Rabbans of the middle ages calling their works 'The Fountain of Life,' 'The Book of Pomegranates,' 'The Garden of Nuts,' or 'The Silver Vase.'

Another feature of the poetry of the Hebrews, especially of the sacred poetry, was its depth of meaning: the inspired poets, and indeed all who wrote poetry, strove to wrap up as many and as full meanings as were possible in the words they used, and therefore the words 'parable,' or 'dark saying,' are often used to express poetic language.

This requires to be borne in mind, in studying the writings of the Psalmists and Prophets of Israel,—that the meaning which seems the plain one, and which first presents itself, was not the only one intended by the poet, but that other deeper meanings are almost always to be sought for, which are wrapped up, as it were, in the first and outer meaning.

§ 4. THE WORD 'SELAH.'

THERE is a word in the Psalms which has given rise to a great deal of conjecture among the Rabbis and the Fathers, as well as modern critics, and which ought not to be altogether passed over, because it is a part of Holy Scripture; and this is the word 'Selah.' It occurs very frequently in the Psalms, and three times in the prayer of Habakkuk, but nowhere else. The Vulgate, Syriac and Arabic translations, as well as that of our Prayer-book, take no notice of it; but the LXX. always render it by the word 'Diapsalma,' meaning 'the division of a Psalm;' and our authorized Bible version inserts it without translating it.

Rabbi Jarchi explains it to mean 'for ever,' and Rabbi Abenezra considers it the same as 'Amen,' and in this sense the modern Jews add it to the inscriptions on their tomb-stones. But these senses are very doubtful. The Hebrew root appears to mean 'to raise up,' and therefore it has been supposed to resemble the word 'Hallelujah,' and to signify 'Exalt ye Jehovah;' but it has also been explained to be 'a flourish of loud trumpets,' alternating with the singers in the temple^s; or to mean a raising the chant an octave higher, or changing it altogether into one in a higher key. Other meanings are those of 'a pause in singing,' and 'a cessation of inspiration.' Whatever the word

^s See 2 Chron. xxix. 26—28.

'Selah' means, it seems used to divide the Psalm in which it occurs into separate poems, and thus to be of use in guiding the reader to the relation of these portions to one another, and so to the true intention and meaning of the Psalm. It is a mark of division.

A PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON

The Book of Psalms.

THE FIRST DIVISION.

PSALMS I.—XLI.

THE Book of Psalms has been from very ancient times looked upon as made up of five Divisions, or smaller books. In this the Jewish Rabbis saw a likeness to the five books which form the Law of Moses. Each of these divisions is clearly marked by a verse, which concludes it, and which ascribes praise and blessing to Jehovah, the God of Israel, in a set form ; and also by the word ‘Amen,’ which inspired men seem often to have placed at the ending of their writings : the fifth alone omits the Amen, and concludes with a Hallelujah. The first Division contains forty-one Psalms, and is closed by the words,—


“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel

From everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.”

The Psalms in this division were, it seems likely, collected and disposed in their present order by David himself, with the exception of the first Psalm, which was probably written as an introduction to the whole Book of Psalms, by the prophet who, under

Divine guidance, finally arranged them in their present form in the canon of holy Scripture. This is generally considered to have been done by Ezra, after the Captivity; and therefore the first Psalm, though it has been sometimes given to Josiah, may be with great probability assigned to him.

The other Psalms which make up this portion, except the 2nd, 10th, and 33rd, bear the name of David in their titles, and these also seem to have been written by him. Indeed, all in this first book shew, in a greater or less degree, the marks of the same writer. They are all eminently what is called 'subjective' in their character; that is, they display the workings of an individual soul, and are the outpourings of an individual heart. They do not, as many of the succeeding Psalms do, enlarge upon the mercy and wisdom of the Almighty, in His dealings with Israel, or in His general providence; but they are of a strictly personal nature. Whether they speak of the glory of the reign of the coming King, or implore pardon for past guiltiness, or ask for defence against cruel and wicked foes, or plead with the All-merciful in instant prayer, they each and all are intensely earnest and vividly real. They bear the plain impress of the warm and quick, and yet tender, spirit of him who was 'the man after God's own heart.' The prayer or the prophecy he was indeed moved to utter by the Holy Ghost, but the words in which it was clothed bear still the traces of the heart which framed and the mouth which spake it.



The Psalms of David.

THE FIRST DAY.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM i. *Beatus vir, qui non abiit, &c.*

1. BLESSED is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly; nor stood in the way of sinners: and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful.

The first word of the first Psalm is a blessing. The first word which God spake to man in the day in which He created him was a blessing; when Christ the Saviour opened His mouth to teach the multitudes, it was with many blessings; and He Himself has told us that the last words which the redeemed shall hear before entering into His eternal joy shall be 'Come ye blessed:' and this first Psalm, and all other Scripture, is written for us and for our learning, that we may know that 'we are hereunto called, that we should inherit a blessing.' Blessed indeed is he who has never been tempted, even for a little while, to indulge in evil thoughts and to listen to the suggestions of the ungodly; who has not lingered at all in the broad road in which sinners hasten to de-

struction ; who has not joined himself to the doctrine of the mocking and unbelieving, and made his resting-place with them. Blessed is he who is kept from sin in will, word, and deed ; and who has grace to follow Him Who is the pattern man, and to be one with Him Who in an evil world was ‘ holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.’

2. But his delight is in the law of the Lord : and in His law will he exercise himself day and night.

But he only can attain to this blessing, and he only can escape from evil, who has set his choice upon that which is holy, and upon Him that is holy ; who hath loved his eternal Lord, and therefore keeps His commandments ; and that not coldly and carelessly, but in earnestness, and faithfulness, and truth. And on Him, Whose acts and words are the perfect expression of God’s law and will, he will always meditate, that he may follow the pattern which He has set, not only in the day of ease and quietness, but in the night of sorrow and of trial too,—not in life only, but even unto death.

3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the water-side : that will bring forth his fruit in due season.

He shall be made like unto a green and fruitful tree in that mystical garden which is the Church of God. The grace of the All-holy shall be with him, even from the time when in the water of holy Bap-

tism he was joined as a branch unto Him Who has called Himself the Eternal Vine, until he stand at the last by that pure river of the water of life that proceedeth from the throne of God and of the Lamb : and by that refreshing grace he will bring forth in this mortal life the fruit of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned, and the fruit of unending glory in that season when the number of God's elect shall be accomplished, and His kingdom shall have come.

4. His leaf also shall not wither : and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper.

By this grace he shall stand continually ; for he hath drunk of the water of which whoso drinketh shall never thirst. Neither the words of his lips nor the works of his hands shall fail ; his memory shall not be forgotten, nor his name be lost ; and all that he doeth and all that he suffereth shall turn to his salvation, through the overruling influence of God the Holy Ghost. He shall share in his Saviour's power, even as he shares in his Saviour's grace.

5. As for the ungodly, it is not so with them : but they are like the chaff, which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth.

They that have cut themselves off from Christ, and have forgotten God, can have neither grace, nor holiness, nor joy. They are unstable in all their ways, they are empty and false in all their works. Each blast of vain doctrine carries them away, and

each impulse of temptation hurries them into sin. 'There is no fruit in them ; they are but chaff, which He, Whose fan is in His hand, will purge away from His floor, and which the storm of the wrath of God shall at the last day sweep from the earth they have trusted in so long, unto the fire which is not quenched.

6. Therefore the ungodly shall not be able to stand in the judgment : neither the sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Therefore, when the day of trial comes, the ungodly will not be able to stand ; they will have no confidence and no hope, when Christ is set upon His throne ; they will be convinced out of their own mouths, and condemned by their own works. There will be then a separation made between those who have served God, and those who have served Him not ; 'for judgment,' it is written, 'must begin at the house of God ; and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?'

7. But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous : and the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Yea, the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, for He hath walked in it Himself ! He knoweth it, for He is Himself the way ! And He will guide him who walketh in it with His grace and counsel here, and after this life ended receive him into His own

eternal glory. But that other way, the end of which is death, shall perish; and they, many though they be, who have walked therein, shall receive that which they have prepared for themselves, even everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.

The first Psalm bears no title; its author may have been Ezra. It describes the blessedness of the righteous man, and the instability and punishment of the wicked. The writers of the Church have differed in their opinion of the person spoken of as the righteous man. Some have somewhat fancifully thought that the opening of the Psalm contained a prophecy of Joseph of Arimathea, who had not "consented to the counsel and deed of them" who plotted against the Saviour. Others have considered that the Saviour Himself, Who came into the world to fulfil all righteousness, was the subject of it. But it would seem to be best interpreted of each one of God's elect, who by His grace walks in His faith and fear; and in such an one the promises of the Psalm will find their fulfilment;—for they are not limited, but are for all times. (See Josh. i. 8; Jer. xvii. 7, 8.) Justin Martyr, an early Christian writer, quotes this Psalm and the one which follows it as if they formed but one Psalm; but they differ so strongly in style and subject, that it is almost impossible to suppose that they ever were one continuous composition, though it is probable that in some copies they were so joined.

FOR EASTER-DAY.

PSALM ii. *Quare fremuerunt gentes?*

1. Why do the heathen so furiously rage together: and why do the people imagine a vain thing?

What can be more full of marvels than the passion of the Son of God! He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. He was in very deed a

Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel; and yet the heathen who knew not God, and the chosen people to whom His coming had been foretold, joined together, the one in blind fury, the other with contriving malice, to slay the Prince of Life. They rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them, instead of Him Who was alone their King. This was their imagination when the beloved Son of the Eternal Father was sent unto them:—‘They reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours.’

2. The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together: against the Lord and against His Anointed.

That indeed was the hour of the powers of darkness; and the Prince of this world seemed for a season to have his will. But it was then as it always must be when man sets himself against God and Christ; and even upon their seeming triumph the Church could not but confess to God:—‘For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.’

3. Let us break their bonds asunder: and cast away their cords from us.

They said in their malicious and rebellious hearts, even as the hard of heart say now,—‘ We will not have this man to reign over us ;’ ‘ We have no king but Cæsar ;’ and so they broke the bonds of the covenant which God had made of old with their father Abraham, and cast away the cords of love by which the Son of Man had striven to draw them to Himself, and knew not that all the while they closed around themselves the bonds of death, and drew tighter and firmer the cords which bound them in misery and sin.

4. He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn : the Lord shall have them in derision.

What is man that he should strive with God ? Their blind rage and crafty malice did but work out His righteous and almighty plan. He Whose throne is heaven hath made the earth His footstool, and ‘ the things which He before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.’ The Christ is indeed crucified and slain ; they have laid Him in the sepulchre ; and have gone their way, sealing the stone and setting a watch, and making it as sure as they can ; but now the morning of the third day is come, and ‘ He is not here : for He is risen.’

5. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath : and vex them in His sore displeasure.

The stubborn and the unbelieving must meet with punishment : they treasure up for themselves wrath. God at length must speak unto them in His anger, and with Him to speak is to do, for His words are deeds. They abuse the long-suffering of the Almighty to their own judgment and condemnation, as the Pharisees abused the Saviour's love and grace ; and thus the very Gospel of life becomes to them a savour of death unto death. So always does evil work out its ends,—first shame, and next sorrow.

6. Yet have I set My King : upon My holy hill of Sion.

Thus does the Eternal Father bear witness to the Son ; He hath declared His will from^{*} heaven : 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.' He hath appointed Him the Judge of quick and dead ; He hath given to Him all power in earth and heaven ; He hath made Him to be King and Head over the Church, that new Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all : and they who strive against His kingship will but vex their own souls by their rebellion, and fall before the sore displeasure of the Almighty.

7. I will preach the law, whereof the Lord hath said unto Me : Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.

'The Son spake to the world the things which He had heard of the Father ;' He preached that royal law which is the Gospel,—nay, rather He Himself was

the Gospel. He Who was neither made, nor created, but begotten, the Almighty Word, Who is, hath been, and shall be, co-eternal, co-equal, co-essential with the Father in that unending now which is eternity, being by inheritance higher than the highest angels, yet took upon Himself a nature lower than theirs; and the Son of God became the Son of Man. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; conquering sin and death and the grave in the Manhood which He had taken into Himself; and by His rising again on the first Easter-day, He was declared with power to be the only-begotten Son of the Father, the Incarnate Christ, and Lord of all.

8. Desire of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance: and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession.

He hath asked and received, not of man, nor by man, but of God. He is raised on high as a Saviour and a Prince; and more and ever more are they whom He has redeemed, being drawn unto Him from the east and the west, the north and the south; and with greater and ever greater fulness is the number being made up of those whom He hath purchased with His blood out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and language.

9. Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron: and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Christ indeed rules the world with the sceptre of His kingdom, but this sceptre is the Cross. In the power of this sceptre would He restrain man's pride, and stubbornness, and subdue his malice and carnal will; with this would He mortify and kill all vices in us, and break our hard and heavy hearts, even as the vessels are broken, that have been marred upon the potter's wheel. But to the unregenerate the Cross is hard, and that which is the very sceptre of Jesus' righteousness, must ever seem to them stern and heavy as an iron rod.

10. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings : be learned, ye that are judges of the earth.

And now, since Jesus alone is the King of whose kingdom there shall be no end,—the King, not only of words and actions, but of spirits and of souls,—the King whose judgment is always right, whose power is always mighty,—would that they who have rule over others, and who by their authority and example can influence their fellows, would learn the wisdom of submitting themselves to the one eternal King, and would seek to make His laws their laws, governing themselves by His will, as becometh members of His Church ! And would that they who are judges of others, and decide for and upon others, might ever do so as they who must give an account at last before His unerring judgment-seat !

11. Serve the Lord in fear : and rejoice unto Him with reverence.

They who would indeed be free must serve Him whose service is perfect freedom, and serve Him only. They who would put off slavish terror must fear God, and fear Him only, and they need have no other fear. They who would taste of true joy must rejoice in the Lord always, and in Him only; and as they increase in reverent obedience and in reverent fear, so will they in the fulness of reverent joy.

12. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and so ye perish from the right way: if His wrath be kindled, (yea, but a little,) blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

LXX. Embrace discipline, lest the Lord be wroth,
And ye perish from the right way.

We kiss another's feet from humility and submission; we kiss his hand in loyalty and respect; we kiss his face in friendship and in love: in each of these ways, in humility, in reverence, in love, let us adore the Son of Man. Let us strive to be like her who loved much because she had much forgiven her; and so fall down and embrace Him, and hold Him fast. If we love Him, His love is sufficient for us. If we embrace Him, we embrace His Cross, His discipline, His law. If we love Him not, He will turn away from us, and with Him all light, all truth, all love, must needs be turned from us too. He who loves Him, and is with Him, is in the right way; and he who is apart from Him, and from His Cross, is lost. When He comes at last to take possession

of His kingdom, it will be His wrath, even the wrath of the Lamb, which shall utterly confound the unholy and the reprobate; and they only who have loved Him, and whom He hath accepted for His own, shall enter into the blessing of His perfect peace.

The second Psalm, though, like the first, it has no title, we know from the New Testament to have been written by David. The first verses are expressly said, in Acts iv. 25, to have been spoken by God, "by the mouth of David." Many have endeavoured to point out a time in David's reign when the expressions of this Psalm might have been applied to him,—when he had conquered the nations and kingdoms round him, and they were unable to throw off his empire. But the Psalm is not only too exalted in its language to be spoken of any earthly sovereign, but we have a divine interpretation given of it, in the inspired hymn of the infant Church, which limits its application to that one anointed King, "against whom Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." It therefore, beyond all doubt, prophesies the opposition which was to be made to the Son of Man, His passion, His resurrection, His eternal generation and union with the Father, and His Kingship over the whole world. It is therefore selected by the Church for Easter-day, because, by raising up His Son from the dead, the Father glorified Him, (Heb. v. 5,) and declared Him to be His Son with power. (Rom. i. 4.) On that day Christ conquered death and hell, the two great enemies of man, and began His reign over and within His Church. This Psalm was always considered by the older Jewish Rabbis to be a prophecy of the Messias, and from it He derived, even before His manifestation, the titles of "the Son of God" and "the King of Israel." (St. John i. 49.)

PSALM iii. *Domine, quid multiplicati?*

1. LORD, how are they increased that trouble me : many are they that rise against me.

It was the prophecy of the Lord to the Church,—‘In the world ye shall have tribulation;’ and again and again it is accomplished. And to each individual soul within the Church, the same words are being fulfilled. The Head of the Church suffered, though He sinned not; and much more must each member that sins, suffer too. He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself; and how is the Church better than He, that she should escape it? He saw the blasphemy of the multitude around His Cross; and she, as she looks abroad, sees ever the truth failing, and earnestness dying out, and love growing cold, while the enemies of the Gospel and the opposers of the faith, and the troublers of peace, are increasing and rising up on every side.

2. Many one there be that say of my soul : There is no help for him in his God.

All these things are against those who, within the Church, are longing to repent and to do the first works. The unbelieving and scornful without seem to join with their own weaknesses and lusts and fears within, to confirm their hopelessness, and to discourage their sorrow and their prayers. There is a suggestion of the foe of souls which the sin-struck and despairing conscience is too often ready

to echo and confirm,—‘There is no help for the even in God, for against Him thou hast sinned This is a heavy cross, and hard to bear; yet the who have sinned must bear it.

3. But Thou, O Lord, art my defender Thou art my worship, and the lifter up of my head.

The great trial that is sent to them that would repent, is the thought, ‘there is no help;’ this they have to struggle with, to break down and to destroy It is the prison-bar which keeps the soul from God Our God is our Father Which is in heaven, and with Him, Who loves us, for that He Himself is Love, we have an eternal Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous He will be, yea, He is, ready to receive and most willing to pardon us. In His mercy is forgiveness for the past and grace for the future. He can dispel our doubtings; He can rule our spirits; He can change our vileness into penitence, and our fearfulness into hope; He can raise us from the depths of despair into the fulness of the comfort of His presence.

4. I did call upon the Lord with my voice and He heard me out of His holy hill.

He can: this we do not doubt. Why then should we doubt that He will? If we ask, will He not give If we call—yea, before we call—will He not answer Let us, like the sorrowing father, cry out with tears ‘Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief! Lord, repent: help Thou mine unrepentance!’ and H

Who is ever with His elect, and Who abideth in the midst of His Church, will hear in His mercy, and answer in His love, and restore in His Sacraments and means of grace.

5. I laid me down and slept, and rose up again : for the Lord sustained me.

And so with quiet faith in Him Who died and rose again, he who was once a sinner but now is pardoned, may resign himself unto the sleep of death, as calmly and as hopefully as he would lie down to sleep at night. There need be no more fearfulness around our grave; than there need be around our bed. He will call us to our rest when He would have us come ; and, if we sleep in Him, we shall in truth ‘do well.’ And again, in His own good time, He will call us to rise again. In life, and in death, and in resurrection, His promise is sufficient for His own,—‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’

6. I will not be afraid for ten thousands of the people : that have set themselves against me round about.

If, then, this be so ; if neither the consciousness of sin, nor despondency, nor death, can separate us from the love of Christ ; if His mercy can overcome them and beat them down, why need we take thought for men ? Be they ever so many, or ever so strong, or ever so violent, yet over them, and over their tempting or threatening words, and over their ill example, we shall be more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.

7. Up, Lord, and help me, O my God : for Thou smitest all mine enemies upon the cheek bone ; Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

LXX. Thou hast smitten all those who hate me without a cause.

The repenting sinner has found his own strength, which is not his own. 'Help me, O my God,' is that with which he can conquer everything that can assail him. It was falsely said, 'There is no help for him in his God ;' he proves its falseness by his appealing cry, 'Help me, O my God.' With that his enemies are put to confusion, and covered with shame ; and their cutting words and reviling taunts are silenced, and wrung from their mouths for ever.

8. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord : and Thy blessing is upon Thy people.

If despair can thus be changed for hope, if the terrors of conscience can be swallowed up in faith and love, and he who was helpless and weak can be made strong to resist and to overcome all that is against his soul, it can only be through One Who is mightier than he. It is not from himself that his deliverance comes, it is not to himself that salvation belongs, but only to Him Who is 'mighty to save.' To God only, and to the Lamb, can salvation be ascribed, and from Them only shall blessings descend upon Their elect,—the blessing of perfect peace upon them who are obedient and upright, and the bless-

ing of perfect pardon upon them who repent them of their sins.

The title of this psalm declares it to have been written by David “when he fled from Absalom his son.” He was then in great danger of losing not only his kingdom, but his life. All Israel had turned after Absalom, and the subtle Ahithophel had advised that they should pursue after David “while he was weary and weak-handed;” and that thus his followers, who were few, would be put to flight, and he would be easily killed. (2 Sam. xvii. 1, 2.) David, therefore, in this the first night of his escape, was in most imminent peril from his rebellious son and his treacherous counsellor, and could have no ground of trust except in the mercy and providence of God. The reproaches of Shimei, which he had felt on his way, must have found an echo in his own conscience; but yet through penitence and faith he was enabled to repose on Him, and thus to wait patiently either for deliverance or for death. The trustfulness and patience of David in this Psalm seems plainly typical of His meekness and endurance Who suffered treachery and violence, and lay down in death, that He might gain salvation for His people, not for Himself.

PSALM iv. *Cum invocarem.*

1. HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness : Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble ; have mercy upon me, and hearken unto my prayer.

The unjust judge at length heard the widow, when by her continual entreaty she had wearied him ; and shall not the God of all righteousness hear the Church of His elect, when she calleth unto Him ? In persecutions, in heresies, in lukewarmness, in bondage, He hath delivered her again and again ; and the orderings of His providence in the

past are an earnest of His mercy for the time to come. And in that firm belief her children are taught to pray that 'they, being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto Him in His holy Church.'

2. O ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme mine honour : and have such pleasure in vanity, and seek after leasing.

The Church has the office of a prophet to discharge as well as that of a priest. She has in the power of the Holy Ghost to fulfil those same duties which her Lord undertook in His sojourn upon earth,—to warn, to rebuke, and to exhort the sons of men, as well as to supplicate for her own, and to intercede for the unheeding world. The commission which she has received is not soon accomplished,—to go into all the earth and preach the Gospel to every creature,—to charge men no longer by their words and lives to blaspheme and dishonour Him Who is her Spouse and Lord,—to bid them to turn from vanities, to serve the living God,—to teach them, by both word and example, that the falsehoods of the world and the pleasures of sin, after which so many seek, are but for a moment.

3. Know this also, that the Lord hath chosen to Himself the man that is godly : when I call upon the Lord, He will hear me.

This, too, she has to teach as a certain and un-failing fact,—that they who do what is right are

chosen by God for His own, and the upright are His delight. To them that have His grace He gives more ; they who grow in His knowledge and His fear are preserved from evil, and sanctified in His truth. They become His children by adoption and grace, ‘heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.’ Of such is His Church, which is one and holy, made up ; and when they pray, He hearkens : for if the effectual fervent prayer of one righteous man availeth much, how much more the prayer of the whole body of the redeemed with Christ their Head !

4. Stand in awe, and sin not : commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still.

LXX. Be ye angry and sin not. [So also Eph. iv. 26.]

Awe is the only feeling which becomes the sons of men, when they reflect upon their privileges and the account which they must give of their use or neglect of them. Passion, clamour, anger, disputings, should cease among them, for all these bring sin in their train. Their one duty, as far as in them lies, is not to sin ; to get, if they possibly can, sin away from them, and out of them altogether ; to be holy, as Christ is holy. And for this, they need often and strict self-examination : ‘Let a man examine himself.’ They must commune with their own heart and conscience in quietness and solitude ; passing in review each night the actions, words, and thoughts of the day ; and, wherever they see themselves to have offended, confessing their fault, and asking pardon of

the All-merciful. This quiet communing with the conscience will become the stepping-stone to innocence and calmness here, and to immortal peace hereafter.

5. Offer the sacrifice of righteousness : and put your trust in the Lord.

Not only has the Church to preach against sin, and to exhort men to holiness, and to self-examination and confession, she has also to lead them continually to that one great Sacrifice which was once offered for the sins of all, by faith in which alone we can be saved. In the power of that sacrifice they are to offer up themselves, their whole being, unto God. They are to crucify their lusts, and so do sacrifice ; they are to cease from wrath, and so do sacrifice ; they are to keep themselves from covetousness, and so do sacrifice ; and to this end they must put trust in that last command of their dying Lord, ‘ This do in remembrance of Me,’ when in that Sacrament which He ordained, He Himself is evidently set forth crucified among us, and His Body is spiritually broken, and His Blood is spiritually poured forth.

6. There be many that say : Who will shew us any good ?

This is ever the yearning cry of man’s heart. It is not satisfied with this world’s good, and it cannot be. In youth and in age, in wisdom and in ignorance, in riches and in poverty, the want for something

happier, truer, better than we have, is ever haunting us. To this cry it is the Church's part to answer. She has the treasure, which had long been hidden, with which man's longings can alone be satisfied; it is hers to give, but not hers to withhold. She is bidden to go into all the world, and to preach the Gospel to every creature, to carry to all that message which alone is an answer to their cry,—‘Who will shew us any good?’

7. Lord, lift Thou up : the light of Thy countenance upon us.

And what is this message? It is the love of God. This is the good which we long for so blindly, not knowing what we crave. This is the good which alone can satisfy, and which, if we want, we want all. ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,’—this is the Gospel which is committed to the Church to preach, the good news she is to shew to all: and they who receive it are no longer left in sorrow and in darkness; they see the light of the countenance of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and seeing Him in the fulness of His love, they receive that perfect blessing which perfectly ‘sufficeth us.’

8. Thou hast put gladness in my heart : since the time that their corn, and wine, and oil, increased.

Heb. Thou hast given gladness to my heart,

More than in the time that their corn and wine increased.

[See Deut. xvi. 13.]

As a kind-hearted man takes pleasure in the well-doing of his neighbours as in his own, so does the Church rejoice when she sees the grace given to the sons of men. There is joy among the angels of heaven, and there is joy among the saints on earth, when those who once had pleasure in vanity are enlightened with the light of God. Yes, what can put greater gladness into the Christian's heart, than to see more frequent communions in the Church,—to see that heavenly Bread and spiritual Cup offered more frequently to the soul, and many, in a still increasing number, desiring to join with himself in feasting thereon ! What can be a cause of greater joy than to see the ordinances of grace being multiplied, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost being shed abundantly on those whom God in holy Baptism hath called, and whom He will confirm and sanctify in His Church ! No Feast of Tabernacles kept of old, can thus compare in holy gladness with the Christian's Eucharistic feast.

9. I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest : for it is Thou, Lord, only, that maketh me dwell in safety.

Strengthened with this grace, and refreshed with this Sacrament, the Church reposes in confidence upon the faithfulness of God. Her prayer is heard and granted ; and each of her true members being by it incorporated into the mystical body of the Son of God, from thenceforth, whether he lives or dies, is Christ's, and His alone. She can therefore commit

them to the earth with thanks to Him Who hath taken them from the miseries of this sinful world into His own unending rest; for she knows that they are of the true Israel, and that in them, whether in life or in death, the saying shall be fulfilled, —‘ The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him.’

This Psalm might have been written at a later period of the rebellion, when the purpose of God to restore David to his throne was beginning to be manifested, and the prophet felt himself called upon to testify to His goodness and faithfulness. It is full of both warnings and exhortations. It is inscribed to “the chief Musician on Neginoth.” This was the name of some instrument with strings, resembling a kind of harp or psaltery, such as those which we see represented on ancient Eastern sculptures.

PSALM V. *Verba mea auribus.*

1. PONDER my words, O Lord : consider my meditation.

2. O hearken Thou unto the voice of my calling, my King, and my God : for unto Thee will I make my prayer.

In every state of our souls we must come to God ; to Him must we make known all the longings of our hearts, praying that He will grant those things only that are expedient for us. He, Who is the King of spirits, and the All-seeing God, marks the unspoken utterings of the heart, the groanings of the soul within itself, and hearkens to those silent petitions no less than to the open prayer of him who calls upon Him.

3. My voice shalt Thou hear betimes, O Lord : early in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up.

The morning is the time of sacrifice ; the morning is the time of prayer. He who would find God must seek Him early. In the bright light of grace, in the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness, only can we set in order the sacrifice of a pure and true-hearted prayer, and look up for an answer to the mercy-seat of that heaven from which nothing false and untrue can come.

4. For Thou art the God that hast no pleasure in wickedness : neither shall any evil dwell with Thee.

On earth there is much to tempt and to lead astray. Evil, and enticements to evil, are ever in the way of those who make their home in this world. They are drawn to take pleasure in what is wicked. But with God is perfect holiness ; and he who would come near to Him, and be received as a dweller in the habitation of His glory and His joy, must put off from him all that is evil.

5. Such as be foolish shall not stand in Thy sight : for Thou hatest all them that work vanity.

6. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing : the Lord will abhor both the blood-thirsty and deceitful man.

Much as they may strive to withdraw from His presence now, the hour is coming that the careless and profane must be confounded at God's presence, when they meet Him in judgment. They will be unable to stand before Him, because of their evil consciences; and He will not bear them before Him, because of His own holiness. He, Whose eye is ever upon the truth, by one single glance will utterly condemn and quell all who have taken pleasure in falsehood and in misleading others; who have indulged their own selfishness, and their love of tyranny and oppression. They will receive the reward of their works. The vengeance which they have wrought for will overtake them, even the abhorrence of the All-merciful God.

7. But as for me, I will come into Thine house, even upon the multitude of Thy mercy: and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple.

But he who loves truth and mercy will find them even here on earth. If he comes where the congregation of God's saints assembles, 'not trusting in his own righteousness, but in the manifold and great mercies' of his Lord, he will meet with Him Who is ever present where His Church is gathered in His Name. And to Him, as revealed within His Church, will his heart and prayer be always turned; even as Daniel in the far-off land turned his face, when he prayed, toward the holy temple of his God.

8. Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness, because of mine enemies : make Thy way plain before my face.

‘Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life,’ and many are the enemies that would turn us from it. Our earnest prayer should be, that He Who is Himself the way would ever lead us safely in it, and shew us of Himself; for as He reveals Himself to those who follow Him more and more, the easier and the plainer does their path of duty and of obedience become.

9. For there is no faithfulness in his mouth : their inward parts are very wickedness.

10. Their throat is an open sepulchre : they flatter with their tongue.

By a sad but yet unalterable necessity, ‘evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.’ The words of an unfaithful mouth come from the inner treasury of a wicked soul. Surely, all that we mortal men can do for each other here, is to speak what is true to each other; and they who will despise this duty to their neighbour, and choose rather to deceive, to pervert truth and to be false, are like an open grave which infects the air around with death.

11. Destroy Thou them, O God; let them perish through their own imaginations : cast them out in the multitude of their ungodliness; for they have rebelled against Thee.

The eternal purpose of Almighty God concerning us is, our election to holiness and blamelessness; and every thing in us, or in others, that contradicts His purpose is an act of rebellion against His predestinating will. Every thought that is evil, every word that is false, every deed that is vile, opposes God's decree, and therefore it is called, and is, 'ungodliness.' The effect of His everlasting law is, that what is right and true shall be; and that what is unright and untrue shall not be, shall perish and be destroyed. And they that think such thoughts and do such deeds, and speak such words, will and must, by the law of the universe, perish with them. The liar must share the fate of his lie, and the ungodly man that of his ungodliness.

12. And let all them that put their trust in Thee rejoice : they shall ever be giving of thanks, because Thou defendest them ; they that love Thy Name shall be joyful in Thee ;

13. For Thou, Lord, wilt give Thy blessing unto the righteous : and with Thy favourable kindness wilt Thou defend him as with a shield.

And by this same law and order of the universe, they who believe in a righteous King and a holy God, and make His will their rule of life, ever draw nearer to Him, as they become more like that for which He made them. The thought that they are willing to do what He would have them do, fills them

with comfort unspeakable. His blessings call forth their love, and their love to Him again wins blessings in return. They are strong in His grace; they are protected by His power as by an unseen shield. No one man or thing, in time or eternity, can ‘harm them that are followers of that which is right,’ who are striving to be that which God has pre-ordained that they should be.

It is not easy to fix upon the part of David’s life to which this Psalm should be assigned. It is not written against his own personal enemies, but is rather a solemn warning to those who are enemies of holiness, and truthfulness, and God. It appears to be a morning hymn, as the two preceding Psalms were perhaps used as evening hymns. It is inscribed “to the chief Musician upon Nehiloth.” This may mean that it was to be sung to flutes, or to such an arrangement of wind instruments as might form a rude kind of organ. Another explanation of the word is, that it was to be sung antiphonally,—one choir chanting the portions of the Psalm relating to the righteous, and another taking up, or “inheriting” those relating to the wicked. The structure of the Psalm rather confirms this view. The LXX. translate it, “for her who obtaineth the inheritance;” which is explained by the Fathers to mean the Church of Christ.

Ebening Prayer.

FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY, BEING THE FIRST PENTITENTIAL PSALM.

PSALM vi. *Domine, ne in furore.*

1. O LORD, rebuke me not in Thine indignation : neither chasten me in Thy displeasure.

If there is one thought which brings greater fearfulness to the soul of him who has sinned, than any other, it is this,—that he has sinned, not only

against an Almighty God, but also against an all-loving Father. He has drawn down upon himself, not only the rebuke of Him Who is just, but the indignation of Him Who is long-suffering and very merciful. It is the immensity of the love of God which makes His displeasure so dreadful.

2. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak : O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed.

This must ever be the cry of man, blind and weak, and full of sin and sorrow,—Lord, have mercy upon me: it is the unceasing litany which the Church would have ever on the sinner's lips; the one strong cry which tells of the inner craving of the soul for that which, if it fails of gaining, it will be lost indeed. The child cries for food, the wounded man for help, the sinner cries for mercy. He has no plea to urge but his own utter need; he can ask for mercy only because he is weak; his only plea for health and salvation is, that in himself there is no strength, no fortitude, no self-reliance.

3. My soul also is sore troubled : but, Lord, how long wilt Thou punish me ?

Heb. My soul also is greatly terrified :

But Thou, O Lord, how long ?

There is no real pleasure in sin; its enjoyment is but for a moment: sorrow and trouble are joined close with it, and death is not far away. By the very law and righteous order of the universe, there must be indignation and wrath, tribulation and an-

guish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. There is the expectation of punishment, the doubt of mercy, the delay of pardon, bound up in the very nature of sin. There is in it, and must be ever, loneliness and despair, and that sickening sense of waiting for what may be long delayed, which is a foretaste of the unending waiting of eternity.

4. Turn Thee, O Lord, and deliver my soul: O save me for Thy mercy's sake.

He only, against Whom we have sinned, can save us. In the Father Whom we have disobeyed and left, Whose words we have forgotten and despised, and Whose anger we most justly fear,—in Him only, and in the endurance of His love, have we any hope. In the very depth of the sinner's anguish and dismay there is an instinctive recollection that He ceases not to be a Father, though we have cast ourselves off from being His sons; there is a hope which rises in his soul, that for His own sake, though not for ours, He may help those who cry to Him for mercy and for grace,—may save them from their sins,—may deliver them from their selfishness and from themselves, and by so delivering them, make them His.

5. For in death no man remembereth Thee: and who will give Thee thanks in the pit?

It is this remembrance alone which is the one spark of life within the sinner's soul, as he lies wounded and half-dead by the wayside of the world. The trembling hope that God is still a Father, can

only save him from despair and death. For this is life eternal,—to know Him the true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent. And this is death eternal,—to be cut off from the knowledge, and the thought, and the remembrance of Him and of His long-redeeming love. And as the tongue of him who is laid within the grave is motionless and dumb, and cannot speak God's praise, so the hardened sinner, who denies God to be his Father, and will not ask for His mercy, and dares not trust in the death and sacrifice of His Son, is cut off from grace, and gains for himself a portion in that outer darkness, where comfort is not, and love is not, and Christ is not.

6. I am weary of my groaning ; every night wash I my bed : and water my couch with my tears.

Repentance is not easy, as some think ; it is a hard and bitter task. As deeply as we have sinned, so deeply must we repent ; for a grievous wound, a long course of cure is needed. It is not the struggle of one hour, or one day, that will undo the evil work of sin ; but day by day, and night by night, must we, as it were, baptize ourselves anew with tears of sorrow ; gazing upon the wounded hands which were nailed for us, and the bleeding feet which our sins pierced through, until we are cut to the very heart with the anguish of holy love. He spared not His blood for us ; should we spare our tears for Him ? She who was forgiven much, wept much, because she loved much.

7. My beauty is gone for very trouble : and worn away because of all mine enemies.

By our sins we have destroyed our innocence ; we have become vile and loathsome, not only in God's sight, but even in our own. In the trouble that sins must ever bring with them, our beauty goes with our holiness ; and nothing is left but that we should abhor ourselves. Our lusts, and evil imaginings, and hateful thoughts, stain and pollute our baptismal garment, and wear it away with their defilements, until what once was our righteousness becomes as filthy rags.

8. Away from me, all ye that work vanity : for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.

Sorrow is not the whole of repentance ; it is not enough to weep for our sins, and to confess what we have done amiss : this is but the beginning. Repentance must have her perfect work in forsaking evil and doing well. We must give up sin, and forsake the company of sinners, if we would indeed arise and return to our Father and our God. He who would be a member of Christ must renounce, not once only, but always, the devil and his works, the vanity of the world, and his own carnal lusts. Then, when he has so done, will he know that God his Father has heard his prayer, that He was watching his groans, was counting his tears, that He might forgive his sins ; then will he know that when he was nearest to death, he was indeed nearest to life ;

that it is only through agony and bitter grief that the soul can arise from the death which sin has wrought.

9. The Lord hath heard my petition : the Lord will receive my prayer.

Blessed is he whose sin is forgiven ! his sorrow is tenfold repaid by the liberty which his soul has gained. Blessed are they that mourn with a true repentance ; for they shall be comforted with a full and perfect pardon ! They may ask but to be as servants, but they will be received as sons. They long but to say, ‘ Father, I have sinned,’ and preventing love meets them and receives them to their Father’s house again. There is no more fear, and no more doubt. He Who has heard the cry for mercy in the past, will grant the prayer for grace in the time to come. His promise fails not,—‘ Ask, and ye shall have.’

10. All mine enemies shall be confounded, and sore vexed : they shall be turned back, and put to shame suddenly.

As there is joy among the angels of heaven over every sinner that repenteth, so there is confusion and vexation among the powers of darkness. Each time that the love of Christ is magnified, and the power of His Cross displayed, does Satan fall like lightning from heaven. With every cry of the repenting soul, ‘ Lord, have mercy upon me !’ is the accuser of mankind rebuked, and silenced, and put to shame.

This Psalm is said to be “on Neginoth, or the harps, upon Sheminith.” This second word, which occurs again in the title to Psalm xii., has been variously explained. Some have thought it to be a tune in which the ~~note~~ ^{octave} of the first note was predominant; others, with more appearance of correctness, to mean harps with eight strings. The LXX. translate Sheminith “upon the eighth,” *day* being perhaps understood; and St. Augustine supposes it to refer either to the day of our Lord’s resurrection, or to the last day, which shall begin when the seven periods of the world are over. The Psalm itself was most probably written by David after his great sin in the matter of Uriah. It breathes the very spirit of his confession before Nathan,—“I have sinned against the Lord;” while the concluding verses express his faith in the promise that “God had put away his sin from him.” (2 Sam. xii. 13.) Some have considered it to be a prayer in sickness; but it certainly speaks rather of a disease of the soul than of the body. It is the first of those which are called the Seven Penitential Psalms, and is, with the other six, appointed by the Church for the services of Ash-Wednesday.

PSALM vii. *Domine, Deus meus.*

1. O LORD my God, in Thee have I put my trust : save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me.

There are times in almost every Christian’s life, when the dealings of God with him are hard to understand, and the course of His providence seems dark and hidden. Evil seems to be better off than good; and bad men seem to gain their own ends; while they who are struggling to do right are despised and hindered, and sometimes made to suffer undeservedly. It was so with David when Saul sought his life so unrelentingly. It has been so with Christ’s Church in different ages; and again and again it comes to pass, that ‘they who would

live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.' This is a sore trial both to patience and to faith. The only safety for the soul when under it, is steadfast, unyielding trust in the Almighty righteousness of God. The conviction that He orders all, and that what He orders is ever just and true, is our only sure deliverance.

2. Lest He devour my soul, like a lion, and tear it in pieces : while there is none to help.

Without this trust, the soul under trial is but as a wandering sheep before the lion's mouth. It must despair in every danger. The great adversary of souls, who is ever, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, will find it an easy prey. He who has distrusted the eternal righteousness of God is helpless and lost indeed; there is no man or thing that can help him.

3. O Lord my God, if I have done any such thing : or if there be any wickedness in my hands ;

Even as David, when some grievous charge had been laid against him before Saul by his enemy, was anxious to declare his innocence, and to clear himself from the false accusation,—to ask, 'What have I done, or what is in mine hand?' so the soul that suffers without seeing the reason for which it is afflicted, is compelled, as it were, to plead its cause with its Maker, and to search into the hidden reason of His dealings.

4. If I have rewarded evil unto him that dealt friendly with me : yea, I have delivered him that without any cause is mine enemy ;

LXX. If I have returned evil to those that returned me evil,
May I fall away empty from mine enemies !

If David had indeed dealt treacherously with Saul, and done him wrong, then he could have understood why he suffered and was punished. But so far from that, Saul had become his enemy without any cause : He had twice spared his life when he was altogether in his power ; and yet he continued to return him hatred for his friendly dealings. So oftentimes all the Christian's strivings after meekness, and charity, and patience, seem useless and of no avail ; his prayers seem wasted, his efforts to do rightly seem lost, and he is tempted mournfully to wonder at the mystery of the ways of God.

5. Then let mine enemy persecute my soul, and take me : yea, let him tread my life down upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust.

It is only in the deepest humility and fear that the Christian can thus appeal to God, and cast himself in his despondency upon His faithfulness and upon His promises. He must not assert his own guiltlessness or integrity in haste or pride, but come to God in faith and meekness. He may, as far as the dispensation by which he is tried goes, know nothing against himself yet is he not thereby justified. It is God alone Who can decide ; but if

his heart condemn him not, then has he confidence towards God.

6. Stand up, O Lord, in Thy wrath, and lift up Thyself, because of the indignation of mine enemies : arise up for me in the judgment that Thou hast commanded.

It is not by his own frail judgment that the Christian must be judged ; still less by the malice, or passion, or contempt, of those who despise and persecute him. It is God alone, the Lord of spirits, Who will finally decide between those who strive to do right, and those who are eager in doing wrong. The wicked may account His patience, slackness ; but His righteous judgment is not the less sure, because it tarries. He has commanded men to execute justice upon the earth, and if they despise His command, He will at length arise and execute it Himself.

7. And so shall the congregation of the people come about Thee : for their sakes therefore lift up Thyself again.

The Christian desires to see the righteousness of God's government vindicated, not for his own sake merely, but for that of others also. The Church at large takes comfort and rejoices when wrong is punished, and right prevails. Her faith is strengthened and the number of her children increased, when it is seen that God is with those who live holily ; and that they who unjustly persecute the good are condemned by Him.

8. The Lord shall judge the people ; give sentence with me, O Lord : according to my righteousness, and according to the innocency that is in me.

There has been but One Who could in their fullness utter these words before God,—‘ He, Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; Who, when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously.’ But in Him, and with Him, His members can speak them too. ‘ The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin ;’ and they who are forgiven can appeal unto Almighty justice, and plead before its bar, that their iniquities are forgiven, and their sins are pardoned.

9. O let the wickedness of the ungodly come to an end : but guide Thou the just.

10. For the righteous God : trieth the very hearts and reins.

This must be the ground of the believer’s patience in affliction, and this the burden of his prayers,—that a time is coming when sin will be altogether at an end ; when all shall be holy, and true, and pure ; when God’s kingdom shall be set up in righteousness, and His will shall be done on earth, as it is in heaven. In the meanwhile He is proving and trying His people, and leading them on to fitness for His kingdom ; judging them, not as man judges, by their outward conduct, but watching with an all-seeing eye every thought of their hearts, and every emotion and impulse of their souls.

11. My help cometh of God : Who preserveth them that are true of heart.

If we after our finite measure will be faithful, He will be faithful according to His own infinity. He Who is the Truth will ever help them that are true, His grace and comfort will never be wanting to those whose hearts are ruled according to His will.

12. God is a righteous Judge, strong, and patient : and God is provoked every day.

13. If a man will not turn, He will whet His sword : He hath bent His bow, and made it ready.

14. He hath prepared for him the instruments of death : He ordaineth His arrows against the persecutors.

Heb. And He fitteth to it the weapons of death ;
He maketh His arrows into flaming ones.

Righteousness, strength, patience,—these are the attributes of our Eternal Judge. Patient He indeed is seen to be ; for each day that passes brings forth new breakings of His law, despisings of His holiness, provokings of His justice. He is strong ; for who can doubt that He can punish if He will ? Though His long-suffering is set at nought, though He has long waited for sinners to repent, and they will not, He ceases not to set before them the ‘quick and powerful’ keenness of His word, ‘which is sharper than any two-edged sword,’ and the fearfulness of that coming judgment which will pierce them through

with eternal sorrows. He is righteous ; for He will ever render unto sin that which it has deserved. They who have wilfully and boldly refused life shall die. They who in their life here have inflamed themselves with lusts, and burnt with malice and with hatred, shall be filled hereafter with the ever-burning anguish of unbearable despair.

15. Behold, he travaileth with mischief : he hath conceived sorrow, and brought forth ungodliness.

For they who have long meditated on and brooded over wrong to others, find at last that it was a wrong to themselves too. No evil thing dies childless. 'When lust is conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.' Most woeful and terrible genealogy !

16. He hath graven and digged up a pit : and is fallen himself into the destruction that he made for other.

17. For his travail shall come upon his own head : and his wickedness shall fall on his own pate.

Malice and wrong-doing is ever digging its own grave. He that thought to betray the Saviour betrayed his own soul. They that nailed Him to the cross were, to their power, working out their own perdition. They went — and they who do in our day such-like deeds, will follow them—to their own place, to that abode in the abyss of misery which

they had prepared, had laboured with aforethought to make ready for themselves. Yes, every despiteful sin done in the face of God is but like an arrow shot against the face of heaven; it will swiftly return upon the shooter's head, and strike him through.

18. I will give thanks unto the Lord, according to His righteousness: and I will praise the Name of the Lord most High.

Thinking thus on the eternal justice of our Almighty Lord, our smaller fears and poorer troubles are swallowed up in the immensity of His righteousness. All that we need be careful for is, to thank Him for His patient love, and to strive to glorify His name with our thoughts, and lips, and lives.

The title of this Psalm is "Shiggaion of David, which he sang concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite," or, as the LXX. give it, "of Cushi the son of Jemini." Shiggaion has the meaning of "wandering." It has been translated "the ignorance," or "the errors," of David; but it should rather be "a Psalm of a wandering or irregular metre." We have no notice in Scripture of Cush the Benjamite; but he was probably one of those who calumniated David before Saul, and incited him to persecute him. Of such David complains to Saul,—“Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?” (1 Sam. xxiv. 9). The name Cush signifies an Ethiopian, and this calumniator was probably so called from the malignity of his disposition. Others suppose that Saul himself was the person spoken of, with an allusion to the name of Kish, his father. And again, with much less probability, Hushai the Archite, or Shimei, have been said to be called Cush, and the writing of the Psalm has been ascribed to the time of the rebellion of Absalom. It was certainly written when David was suffering great distress and danger, and that too undeservedly, and without any fault of his own; and therefore, most probably during his persecution by Saul.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM viii. *Domine, Dominus noster.*

1. O LORD our Governour, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world : Thou that hast set Thy glory above the heavens !

How surpassing great is the glory of that Almighty Lord Who has made heaven and earth, and rules over and governs the things which He has made. His Name, as the Creator of the universe, is unceasingly magnified by all His works, which He has disposed in their order, according to His own all-wise will. 'O let the heavens and the earth bless the Lord : praise Him and magnify Him for ever.' But it is not only in the material creation that His wonders are displayed ; the marvels of His grace in redemption are mightier than the marvels of His wisdom in creation. Here we see only a portion of His glory ; its perfection is above our sight. The excellence of His love is greater than the excellence of His providence and His power. His glory which is manifested in Christ, Who hath ascended into heaven, is loftier than the firmament, and shines more brightly than the stars.

2. Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength, because of Thine enemies : that Thou mightest still the enemy, and the avenger.

LXX. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings

Thou hast perfected praise. [Also St. Matth. xxi. 16.]

And this is one of the marvels of His glory, that He has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the wise. When the Son of God was first manifested to the world, the holy Innocents of Bethlehem bore witness to Him by their deaths, although they knew Him not; while Herod, who might have known Him, sought His life. And again, when the Son of man came in His triumph of humility to His own city of Jerusalem, the little children cried around Him, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' while the Pharisees and rulers were silent, in enmity and rage. They confessed Him with their lips, though they could but understand in part the words they said; and He was pleased to accept their witness, and by it to confound those His enemies, who, thinking themselves wise, had become both fools and sinners. Thus, in the defenceless weakness of the Innocents of Bethlehem, was God's strength established, and by the unconscious tongues of the children in the temple was God's praise perfected; and thus are Christians taught that by simplicity, and innocence, and meekness, can only the enemy of souls be quelled.

3. For I will consider Thy heavens, even the works of Thy fingers : the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained.

With the same feelings with which David of old, keeping his father's sheep by night upon the plains of Bethlehem, looked upon the firmament of stars above his head, aye, and with still deeper

feelings of awe and wonder, may we look upon the heavens now. Their beauty, their immensity, their unerring regularity, make us feel and know that there is but one hand which could have planned their order, but one finger which could have pointed to them the paths in which they should go. And yet this visible universe is but a small part of His created works; there lies within it and beyond it another universe,—invisible, spiritual, eternal. And this inner and spiritual universe is so set over against the outer world, that the visible heavens are to the mind of faith but a suggestion of the angels and archangels who surround the throne of God; the moon walking through the night in brightness is but a reflection of the Church of Christ in this world; and the stars which are scattered in the skies, like dust beneath the feet of God, are but shadows of those degrees of immortal shining in which the saints and the elect shall be arrayed before the throne of Christ.

4. What is man, that Thou art mindful of him : and the son of man, that Thou visitest him ?

Compared with the starry immensity of heaven, how insignificant we seem; compared with its cycles of ages, how minute is our term of years! What is man, whose strength is weakness, and whose end is death, that amid the complication of unnumbered worlds, God should think of him? What is the fallen child of Adam, sunk in selfishness and bound in sin, that He should leave the angels and the powers

above, and come down to dwell with him,—yea more, to suffer and to die with him?

5. Thou madest him lower than the angels : to crown him with glory and worship.

Heb. Thou hast made him less for a little while than the Elohim,
i. e. the gods : [See Gen. iii. 5.]

Thou hast crowned him with joy and honour.

What the first Adam lost for us, the second Adam won back for us, and greater glories too. The first was indeed placed but a little lower than the angels, he was formed in the image of God, and made a living soul; but from that state he fell, he covered himself with shame and sin, and became subject unto death. It was to that fallen race that the second Adam came; He Who was the Lord of angels became the Son of man. God took man's nature; God became man; and 'Jesus, having been made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.' It was through impatience at being less than the spiritual powers, that man disobeyed and fell: 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' It was through patience and suffering that he was redeemed by Him Who said,—I will be as man, to know good and evil.

6. Thou madest him to have dominion of the works of Thy hands : and Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet ;

The second Adam was made a quickening spirit. 'The Lord from heaven' died, and rose again, He ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He covered our sinfulness with His righteousness; He overcame death by life; He raised our earthliness into heaven, and in Him the lowest nature of all was placed above all. What man lost, Christ regained. All created things are again put in subjection to the second man. Both this world and that which is to come, both things seen and unseen, all life, all power, all glory, are His. He must reign until He has put all things under His feet; until His foes and ours,—sin, and hell, and death, the last enemy that shall be destroyed,—are subdued and trampled down by Him, and by us in Him.

7. All sheep and oxen : yea, and the beasts of the field ;

8. The fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea : and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas.

To man before his fall was given 'dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing which moveth upon the earth.' So in the same way Christ, the Son of man, Who is risen and ascended, is Lord of all. Above all, He is the head of His Church, and all her 'differences of administrations' are His and come from Him. His are the souls of those who

believe, who are the sheep that He has sought and saved; His are the ministers of His word who labour in His Church; His are they who once were fierce and wild, who once were careless and indifferent, wandering only at their own evil will, who once were given up wholly to the world, and knew no more and sought no more than worldly things, but who all now, by the power of His Cross and the drawing of His grace, have become His servants and confess Him as their Lord.

9. O Lord our Governour : how excellent is Thy Name in all the world !

And now that Christ is ascended, and hath sat down at the right hand of God, the glory of the Father is displayed in fuller measure than it was before. The humanity of Christ has been exalted on high, and He has gained a Name which is above every name, because, being God, He died and rose again for man. Behold the change,—before the Son of God descended, His Name was only known in Israel; since the Son of Man hath ascended, it is known in all the world ! Oh may that Name be magnified and hallowed and exalted evermore, through which death has been destroyed, the gates of paradise have been opened, and men have become equal to the angels, yea, greater than the angels, for man has become God !

This Psalm was probably written by David, at the time when he kept his father's flock, and when he must often have been led, in the calm and grandeur of an Eastern night, to contrast the glory and im-

ments of the starry firmament with man's seeming insignificance. It is inscribed, as those before it, to the Chief Musician, with the addition "upon Gittith." This some explain to mean upon a musical instrument brought from Gath, or invented by the Philistines there. Others take it as having some reference to Goliath of Gath. The LXX. translate it "for the wine-presses," as if it were a Psalm to be sung at vintage-time; or in a more mystical meaning, as if it referred to the wine-press of Christ's passion, which He trod alone. But St. Augustine interprets it of the Church, which God has set as a wine-press in the midst of the world. The verses four to eight are, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us, to be referred to Christ. (Heb. ii. 6—10.) In Him are joined the two whole and perfect natures of God and man, so that the two extremes of weakness and dominion, of lowliness and glory, meet and are reconciled in one. For this reason, this Psalm is very fitly appointed by the Church for the service of Ascension-day.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM ix. *Confitebor tibi.*

1. I WILL give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart : I will speak of all Thy marvellous works.

2. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee : yea, my songs will I make of Thy Name, O Thou most Highest.

The dealings of God with us are always wonderful, and are always calling for our thanks and praise. His providence often goes on for a long time in a quiet, calm course; and because there is nothing striking or startling in it, we think that there is nothing marvellous. Yet the thanksgiving of our whole heart is as deeply due to our Father in

heaven, for His daily giving us our daily bread, for His daily delivering us from daily evil, as for greater and more special instances of His mightiness and love. But when by some clear and striking providence of deliverance either from danger, or sorrow, or perplexity, the feeling of His eternal Kingship is more strongly than usual impressed upon our souls, then should we rise to a higher tone than usual of holy joy and spiritual gladness, and shew forth by our lips, as well as by our lives, our trust in Him Who is most infinite in His goodness as in His power.

3. While mine enemies are driven back : they shall fall and perish at Thy presence.

Thus did David feel when God, by his hands, had destroyed the champion Goliath, who had defied his countrymen: and when the Philistines after his death had been put to flight, and they who had insulted and oppressed Israel were subdued and slain. And thus does the Christian feel when his trials are removed, and his temptations overcome, and his doubts and fears are chased away and brought to nothing by faith in Christ's abiding presence with His faithful people.

4. For Thou hast maintained my right and my cause : Thou art set in the throne that judgest right.

As it was with David the shepherd-boy in his conflict with the giant of Gath, so will it be with the Christian in his fight against the enemies of his soul,

the world, the flesh, and the devil ; so will it be with the Church in her final conflict with that manifestation of evil in the person of Antichrist, which David's fight with Goliath typifies and prefigures. He Who is righteous maintains the righteous cause ; He Who sitteth upon the throne of eternal justice decides that what is true and right shall and must prevail, and that what is false and wrong shall and must be destroyed.

5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, and destroyed the ungodly : Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.

He has rebuked the heathen by the preaching of His word. For falsehood and idolatry fall before the word of truth, as Goliath fell before the sling of David. He shall destroy the ungodly by the brightness of His coming : and in the kingdom which He shall establish for His triumphant Church, there shall be no more sin,—nothing vile, or false, or ungodly, shall enter there ; their very names shall be forgotten, and shall be mentioned no more throughout eternity.

6. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end : even as the cities which thou hast destroyed ; their memorial is perished with them.

Heb. O thou enemy, thy swords are come to an end for ever :
And cities thou hast extirpated :

Their memorial is destroyed with them.

: LXX. Their memorial is perished with a sound.

By the first advent of the Son of God evil is in part destroyed, and by His second advent it shall be so in entirety. By the one, the enemy of souls has been cast down like lightning from heaven; by the second, he shall be cast bound for ever into the abyss of fire. Through the power of the cross has he been crushed and conquered; his weapons of destruction wherein he trusted have been wrested from his grasp, as his sword was taken from the Philistine; the sting of death has been broken, and the dominion of the grave destroyed. Those nations which had lain under the power of Satan have been set free, and made subject unto grace; or, if they continued firm in their impenitence and unbelief, they have been destroyed like the cities of the plain; and the memory of those sinners who dwelt in them has perished with themselves, has vanished like the sound of their dying cry.

7. But the Lord shall endure for ever : He hath also prepared His seat for judgment.

They are ended, but there is One Who abideth, even the Lord Who is Judge and King; and His righteous judgment is not merely a future judgment, but is eternal, for it is inseparable from God Himself. It has been begun of old; it is now still going on, not the less surely because we take little note of it; it is preparing the universe for that last consummation, when the throne shall be openly set, and the final decision shall be made, and good and evil shall be separated from each other for ever.

8. For He shall judge the world in righteousness : and minister true judgment unto the people.

In this is His righteousness displayed, that He hath committed all judgment unto the Son ; and He, Who has known our trials, and borne our burdens, and conquered our temptations, judges us according to what we are, and not according to what we are not. His judgment is righteous, for He is the Son of Man, who suffered, and was dead ; His judgment is true, for that He ascended into heaven and sat down upon the throne of God.

9. The Lord also will be a defence for the oppressed : even a refuge in due time of trouble.

Thus marvellous are the works of God in His righteousness, His judgment, and His power ; but still more marvellous in His patience, His pity, and His love. ‘Blessed are the poor, Blessed are the meek, Blessed are they who suffer for righteousness’ sake,’—these, and such-like, are the sentences of His all-righteous judgment, by which He comforts and sustains those who suffer. And He Himself is the Consoler, when the time of pain or of trial comes ; He Himself is the one Deliverer ‘in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.’

10. And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee : for Thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek Thee.

‘ This is His name, whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness;’ and they who know Him by this name will, in spite of their own fears, and in spite of their own sins, trust in Him. They are ‘ persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed unto Him, against that day.’ Heaven and earth will shrink and fade, but His mercy towards those that have come to Him, and are His, stands fast for ever.

11. O praise the Lord Which dwelleth in Sion : shew the people of His doings.

It is the glory of Christ, as shewn in and towards His Church, that calls for our devoutest praise ! It is the thought that He is not merely in heaven upon the seat of Almighty power, but that He is with us upon earth, and manifests Himself to human hearts in the ministrations of His Word and in the Sacraments of His grace, that should excite our wondering thankfulness. These higher marvels we shall forget or hide at our own peril ; our joy should be to tell others of their healing power, and to bring them too to ‘ taste and see’ His graciousness.

12. For, when He maketh inquisition for blood, He remembereth them : and forgetteth not the complaint of the poor.

No one good thought, no one loving word, no one trustful feeling, is forgotten by the King of all. They who have suffered for Him shall also reign with Him ; they who have died for His truth shall

live with Him in His joy. In that last great day when He shall search out every hidden thing, He will remember them who have borne witness to Him even to death, and they shall be confessed by Him before the angels of God. Then the poor in spirit shall possess the kingdom, and the mourners here be consoled with eternal consolation.

13. Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; consider the trouble which I suffer of them that hate me : Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death.

14. That I may shew all Thy praises within the ports of the daughter of Sion : I will rejoice in Thy salvation.

Suffering is good for us, nay, often temptation is good for us, for it makes us see our own feebleness, and our constant danger. When men in their malice would force us into sin, or in their guile would entice us, there is but one means of escape,—‘Lord, have mercy upon me.’ This cry He is never slow to hear and to answer, Who only can set us in the upward way unto the eternal Sion, Who only can turn us from that much-trod road of folly, and carelessness, and sin, which leads to eternal death, whose ending is before the gates of hell. They who are safe within the gates of the Church of God are secure indeed ; they can rejoice evermore in His saving grace, for He hath built His Church upon that rock which is Himself, and against her, and against those that are

within her portals of salvation, the gates of hell—yawn widely as they may—shall never, even for a time, prevail.

15. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made : in the same net which they hid privily, is their foot taken.

16. The Lord is known to execute judgment : the ungodly is trapped in the work of his own hands.

It is the wicked who bring confusion upon themselves. Their own sin it is that destroys them. Each time men indulge a malicious wish, they wound and injure their own souls. Each time they seek to allure others into sin, they entangle themselves more inextricably than ever in its deadly meshes. We see this even now, but it will be still more clearly known at the last day. Then it will be out of their own mouths that the ungodly will be judged, and it will be their own works which pronounce their doom ; even as Goliath was slain by his own sword. Surely this is a mysterious fact, upon which we may well pause awhile and meditate !

17. The wicked shall be turned into hell : and all the people that forget God.

For there is a state of darkness, and hopelessness, and unending woe, which they will purchase to themselves for their own inheritance, who despise God's holiness and neglect His truth. There sorrow is

eternal, and remorse of no avail, for they who have forgotten God are forgotten by Him. There shall they who have made themselves reprobate be left alone with their misery, and face to face with their sins, in a despair whose hours are ages !

18. For the poor shall not alway be forgotten : the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever.

But they who remember God shall never be forgotten of Him. They may have to endure poverty and sorrow, but in patience they will possess their souls. No earnest hope is ever lost, no patient waiting shall ever fail of its reward, no act of humility or wish for meekness will pass unnoticed by Him Who seeth all and ruleth all. In Him shall the meek have their inheritance, which shall abide with them, imperishable and eternal.

19. Up, Lord, and let not man have the upper hand : let the heathen be judged in Thy sight.

20. Put them in fear, O Lord : that the heathen may know themselves to be but men.

It is in mercy often that God manifests His judgments. Sorely are the unthinking tried when they see, to all appearance, man having the upper hand, and ordering things at his will. They begin to forget that there is another Lord of Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things. But when He

does arise, and by a plain and visible act of His providence punishes the wrong-doers, then are even the careless impressed with fear; they see that they are but frail and feeble things, made from the dust by His power, and turned again to the dust at His will. They are thus made to reflect, and fear, and know.

The title of this Psalm shews it to be by David, "upon Muthlabben." These words have been very variously explained. The LXX. render them, "For the hidden mysteries of the Son;" and the Fathers accordingly have explained it of the Incarnation, and the Second Advent of the Saviour. Another translation is, "upon the virginals for Ben," the Levite (1 Chron. xv. 18). Some commentators would transpose the letters of the second word, and so interpret it, "Upon the death of Nabal, or of the fool." But the best rendering appears to be, "upon the death of the Champion," that is, of Goliath of Gath. This would shew that the Psalm was originally written by David as a thank-offering for his marvellous victory over him who had for a long time successfully defied the armies of Israel. From the mention of Sion, however, in verses 11 and 14, it would seem likely that the Psalm, as first composed by him, was added to and corrected in his after life; while the title was retained in remembrance of the signal occasion which had called it forth, (1 Sam. xvii.) At verse 16 the words "Higgaion, Selah" occur, which seem to be a direction to pause awhile for meditation.

PSALM X. *Ut quid, Domine?*

1. WHY standest Thou so far off, O Lord : and hidest Thy face in the needful time of trouble ?

This is the supplication of Christ's holy Church in all time of temptation, doubt, and persecution. It is the absence of the Saviour that is ever her sorest

trial; and this may be so more especially in those last days, when the perilous times for hope and faith shall come. Christ withdraws Himself for the trial of our love: in our prosperity we miss Him not; it is not till the time of trouble comes that we feel how needful His abiding presence is.

2. The ungodly for his own lust doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the crafty wiliness that they have imagined.

3. For the ungodly hath made boast of his own heart's desire: and speaketh good of the covetous, whom God abhorreth.

All wanton injustice, and mockery, and persecution, are forerunnings and types of what the last fearful trial and persecution of the Church will be. It will combine intense cunning,—so as to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect,—with unbounded power; and, though it will at last be utterly brought to nought, yet it will seem for a time to prevail. But even now there are many antichrists; for each one who is against Christ is an antichrist, and every spirit that is opposed to Him is the spirit of Antichrist. Especially so is that spirit of frantic pride which boasts of its own power and ability to do whatever it chooses, and that other more subtle spirit which gives honour to mere money, and to those who have money, however they may have gained it. This is one of the special forms of Antichrist at the present day—the speaking good of the covetous, whom God abhorreth.

4. The ungodly is so proud, that he careth not for God : neither is God in all his thoughts.

Heb. The wicked one in the pride of his face will not enquire :
"There is no God," is all his thought.

Atheistic pride will be one of the characteristics of Antichrist. Wherever there is pride, it is opposed to Christ and to His Holy Spirit. He who looks to himself, and not to God, who seeks for his own gain, and judges for himself without reference to right and truth, and acts in defiance of God's will,—he has the spirit of Antichrist, and is not far from utter atheism and reprobation. His projects will be such, that in their very nature they will be a denial of God.

5. His ways are alway grievous : Thy judgments are far above out of his sight, and therefore defieth he all his enemies.

6. For he hath said in his heart, Tush, I shall never be cast down : there shall no harm happen unto me.

It is because he cannot see the hand of a righteous King in the government of the world, that he will act so proudly and despitefully. The evil-doer never discerns that what is right, and good, and true, and fair, in their own nature, must always prevail; and that what is base, and false, and unjust, and wicked, must of their own nature perish and come to nothing. He will not learn that the

Almighty God is even now carrying on an unceasing and ever-present judgment in the world, always saying to all that is right and true, Prosper ye blessed ; always saying to what is wrong and false, Perish ye cursed. And because he will not see nor understand this, he defies his enemies—his own lust, and covetousness, and falsehood, and pride—to hurt him or to cast him down ; and his secret idea is that he will always be the same ; that nothing will ever change with him, nor any judgment overtake him ; and that in spite of all the harm he causes, no harm can or will happen to him.

7. His mouth is full of cursing, deceit, and fraud : under his tongue is ungodliness and vanity.

Therefore he will allow himself in every evil communication. With the tongue formed to bless God will he curse men made in His image. The utterings of his tongue will be from the very inspiration of the spirit of lies. His mouth will be stored with all words that are miserable and hurtful, as a serpent's mouth is stored with venom.

8. He sitteth lurking in the thievish corners of the streets : and privily in his lurking dens doth he murder the innocent ; his eyes are set against the poor.

9. For he lieth waiting secretly, even as a lion lurketh he in his den : that he may ravish the poor.

10. He doth ravish the poor : when he getteth him into his net.

11. He falleth down, and humbleth himself : that the congregation of the poor may fall into the hands of his captains.

He who acts thus is even as a highway murderer : he is a robber and murderer of souls. And this shall be the character of Antichrist, and of his times. Not merely by open persecution and tyrannous violence, but by every form of hypocrisy, and speaking of lies, and fraud, will that last grand and terrible attack upon the poor of Christ be made. The poison of the serpent, the treachery of the murderer, the crouching rage of the lion, and the ambush of the hunter, each and all will be put in use by that 'man of sin,' who shall in the last days arise to devastate the Church. Thus shall he 'speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws ; and they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of times.'

12. He hath said in his heart, Tush, God hath forgotten : He hideth away His face, and He will never see it.

That which is the sorrow of them that are striving to do well, is the glory and hope of the sinner,—God hath forgotten me. While the one mournfully asks why the Lord hideth His face, the other rejoices

and is bold in the thought that His face is hidden, and that He does not see. His blasphemous trust and comfort are in the *un*righteous government of God,—and vain indeed they are.

13. Arise, O Lord God, and lift up Thine hand : forget not the poor.

14. Wherefore should the wicked blaspheme God : while he doth say in his heart, Tush, Thou God carest not for it.

The one refuge in temptation and in persecution is prayer. The wicked lies unto his own heart, for God hath not forgotten. It may be that He is waiting, but He is judging too. There is no more dreadful speech, no deeper insult to the majesty of God, than to impute to Him that He cares not for the right-doing or the wrong-doing of the creatures He has made.

15. Surely Thou hast seen it : for Thou beholdest ungodliness and wrong.

16. That Thou mayest take the matter into Thine hand : the poor committeth himself unto Thee ; for Thou art the helper of the friendless.

17. Break Thou the power of the ungodly and malicious : take away his ungodliness, and Thou shalt find none.

He has beheld all the cruelty and falsehood of the wicked, and all the sorrows and sufferings of the

poor ; for He is ever beholding all that is. He saw the affliction of His people in Egypt, and the cruelty of their taskmasters ; so will He see the sufferings of His elect in the latter days. So does He see all the suffering of them that are oppressed now. We may safely, if we can only gain sufficient faith, leave all things in the hand of God ; for ‘He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.’ He Who is the Father of the fatherless, and the God of all comfort, will at length cut short the career of the oppressor. He will come to search out his sin, and to take away his power, and at His coming he will be struck down like one whose arm is broken with a blow. He will utterly perish and come to nothing before the revelation of the presence of God.

18. The Lord is King for ever and ever : and the heathen are perished out of the land.

He is, hath been, and shall be, an all-righteous King, ‘of Whose kingdom there shall be no end ;’ but then shall His righteousness shine forth in brighter majesty, when all that is wrong and vile is crushed and quelled, and perfect holiness and perfect truth are the visible and mighty pillars of His unending throne. And all that are unbelieving, and cruel, and impure, and liars against His truth, shall be driven by their own goading consciences from His kingdom unto their own place.

19. Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the

poor : Thou preparest their heart, and Thine ear hearkeneth thereto ;

20. To help the fatherless and poor unto their right : that the man of the earth be no more exalted against them.

He heareth always. He hath taught us how to pray, and He hearkens to the prayer which He Himself hath taught us. He giveth grace to pray, that in our prayer we may pray for grace. He is an everlasting Father, Who ever loveth those children who obey Him, and keepeth them for His own, that He alone may be their Helper and their Trust ; and that no mortal being, formed from the clay of earth, may challenge to himself that reverence, and that obedience and worship, which the children of God can pay only to their heavenly Father and their eternal and immortal King.

This Psalm in the Hebrew has no title. In the LXX. and the Vulgate it forms a part of the preceding Psalm, and therefore in those translations from this point to the 147th the Psalms are numbered as one behind the Hebrew original and the English translations. Both from its style, and its close connection with the subject of the preceding Psalm, it may be considered to have been written by David. The Syriac version bears the title, “ of the enemy’s attack upon Adam and his race, and how Christ will quell his arrogance ;” and in accordance with this the earlier interpreters have seen in it a reference, not merely to oppressors and ungodly men in general, but to “ that wicked one whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming : even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders,” (2 Thess. ii. 8, 9). The Psalms from the 9th to the 14th, being six in number, form a group connected among themselves and having one common subject—the oppressions, wrongs, and seductions

which the right-doers suffer from the treacherous malice and deceitfulness of the wicked. They are a warning and a preparation for the Church, against that last great persecution of Antichrist foretold by the Spirit, which will unite both the violence of tyranny and the seductions of heresy in itself; and of which all spiritual wickedness and cruelty, and abuse of power, whether in Churches, in nations, or in individuals, are foreshadowings and types.

PSALM xi. *In Domino confido.*

1. IN the Lord put I my trust : how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill ?

2. For lo, the ungodly bend their bow, and make ready their arrows within the quiver : that they may privily shoot at them which are true of heart.

The strength of the believer is in his faith. When the time of darkness, of danger, and of trial draws near, our timid spirits are only too ready to echo the suggestion that it would be well if we could flee away, and leave this scene of daily strife and daily weariness. Who, however firm in his own convictions, has not, in the midst of whispered doubts of what is true, and loud assertions of what is false, and the mockeries and sneers of the unbelieving and the wicked, been tempted to a hasty prayer, that he might be taken from it all, and be allowed to flee away, like a bird startled from the open field to her hiding-place among the distant hills? So, doubtless, was David tempted to feel while hunted 'like a partridge

he mountains' by those who sought his life. The remedy must be to bide God's time, and to trust in him,—this is that 'shield of faith, wherewith we all be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.'

3. For the foundations will be cast down : and what hath the righteous done ?

Heb. For the foundations are overturned.

What can the righteous do ?

A little trouble makes us despond. The faith even of those who strive to be true of heart is equal but to a very slight assault ; and as it fails, it seems to us as if all truth and holiness were failing too. A persecution comes, and the very foundations of the Church seem to totter, and the wavering Christian loses heart and hope, and knows not what to do. A transitory denial of the doctrines he has believed, a short-lived withdrawal of the Sacraments which have been his comfort, become to his imperfect faith a very overturning of the foundations of belief, and a motive to despair in what seems to him his unmerited perplexity. But He Who is the One perfectly righteous hath by His own death and passion laid them sure ; He is Himself the foundation, which nothing can ever overturn.

4. The Lord is in His holy temple : the Lord's seat is in heaven.

5. His eyes consider the poor : and His eyes look down on the children of men.

The holiness and the mightiness of God are not measured by our poor faith. Christ is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for ever as an eternal Priest for the members of His Church on earth. He is marking all their trials, and watching all their struggles ; and the feebleness of our human nature, and its utter defencelessness, are well known to Him Who once on earth shared in it Himself.

6. The Lord alloweth the righteous : but the ungodly and him that delighteth in wickedness doth His soul abhor.

LXX. The Lord assigneth a place to the just and to the impious ;

And he who loveth injustice hateth his own soul.

They who are desirous of doing what is right are acting after their degree in the same way that God acts ; and he approves their wishes and attempts, however feeble they may be. He tries all by His patient providence, and by the offer of His Spirit, and they who are in the right are approved by Him ; and from them who are found wanting by their own stubborn refusal of His grace, and by the pleasure which they have taught themselves to take in evil, He turns away in condemnation. They who have loved sin do not only provoke God, but they prove the deepest and bitterest enemies of themselves, and their own souls.

7. Upon the ungodly He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest : this shall be their portion to drink.

All that we can taste of pain, and misery, and torment is the portion of the ungodly. But the eternal God is especially wroth with those who hinder the salvation of others. They who make ready their quiver, that they may do harm privily, shall find a torrent of burning agony and shame presently poured down upon themselves. They shall be caught in that storm, and shall not escape, as the sinners of Sodom and of Gomorrah perished in the rain of fire and sulphur from above. Their lot which they will have chosen for themselves, the cup which they will have mingled for themselves, will be utter misery, bitter and parching and deadly as the fierce hot blast of the southern desert.

8. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness : His countenance will behold the thing that is just.

For God, Who is right-doing Himself, loves right-doing and the right-doers. And as He turns away from the wilful doers of wrong in anger, so does He Who is our heavenly Father look with an eye of mercy and with an ever-watchful providence upon them who are striving to be conformed in will and deed to His all-holy law. They who have loved righteousness and hated evil shall see His face, looking on His second creation as on His first, and pronouncing it very good.

This Psalm was evidently written by David, while persecuted by Saul. He had been told, by his friends more probably, that Judæa was no longer a safe abode for him, and he must flee, as he had been

compelled to do before, to some mountain or stronghold, perhaps in the wilderness of Ziph, (1 Sam. xxiii. 14,) where he might shelter himself, and escape the hatred and the treachery of his cruel and unjust master. In the perplexity and grief that such advice would cause, he turns to God and to His unvarying righteousness and retributive providence, as that which alone could strengthen his faith, in his sufferings and danger.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM xii. *Salvum me fac.*

1. HELP me, Lord, for there is not one godly man left : for the faithful are minished from among the children of men.

Heb. Help, Lord, for the godly ceases :

Truths fail among the sons of men.

2. They talk of vanity every one with his neighbour : they do but flatter with their lips, and dissemble in their double heart.

God is an everlasting help, whatever else may fail. Sometimes the believer seems almost left alone ; there seems to be no religion left. Faith and truth seem to be quite lost and forgotten, and no one cares for them. Then comes the temptation to cry like Elijah when persecuted by Ahab and Jezebel, ‘ I, even I only am left.’ The precept of the apostle, ‘ Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another,’ seems utterly reversed ; and men seem rather, putting away truth, to speak lyings one with another. The thought of communion in a

common Church, under a common Father, is quite neglected and despised ; and words of brotherhood are but false, and not believed by them who speak them ; and double-dealings and dissemblings are all that are found in their place.

3. The Lord shall root out all deceitful lips : and the tongue that speaketh proud things ;

4. Which have said, With our tongue will we prevail : we are they that ought to speak, who is lord over us ?

For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment. Whatever has been said to the deceiving and misleading of others ; whatever has been said to establish man's will and carnal pride, in opposition to the law and revelation of God, shall be then convicted of falsehood, and be a source of confusion and shame to them who have spoken it. By his words shall each faithful man be justified, and by his words shall each sinner be condemned. Many may exalt themselves, and set up themselves, their own views and their own authority, by specious and high-sounding words, who shall at last be found, for all their pride, to know nothing, and shall 'perish in the gain-saying of Core.'

5. Now for the comfortless troubles' sake of the needy : and because of the deep sighing of the poor,

6. I will up, saith the Lord : and will help

every one from him that swelleth against him, and will set him at rest.

None who cry to God for help shall cry in vain. Because of those whose faith is injured, and whose consciences are wounded, by the false and yet proudly spoken assertions of men puffed up in their own self-esteem, God will at length take the matter into His own hands. He will speak Himself, and His words, strange as they may appear to blinded hearts, shall set those who are disquieted at rest. 'Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God,' has filled with comfort many a troubled soul, and consoled many a sigh.

7. The words of the Lord are pure words : even as the silver, which from the earth is tried, and purified seven times in the fire.

Heb. Silver refined in a crucible from the earth ;
Purified seven times.

The words of God in Christ are not as man's words, spoken at random, light and vain ; they are pure, precious, weighty. They are as a treasure hid in a field, which whoso findeth must give up all that he has to gain, and take unto himself, and then will he be rich indeed. There is no alloy of this world, no dross of earthly feeling in the words of Christ ; they are purified by that sevenfold Spirit of God which He that spake them to us possessed without measure.

8. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord : Thou

shalt preserve him from this generation for ever.

They who receive and value those words of seven-fold purity shall be preserved from that deadness of faith and misery of doubt into which those around them fall. To the pure all things shall be pure; so to the true all things shall be true; while to the false and deceitful, even the very words of truth itself become doubtful and unsure. They who believe the truth here by faith shall through preventing grace be so guided through the deceitfulness of temporal things, that they lose not the attainment of the eternal things, which neither deceive nor change.

9. The ungodly walk on every side : when they are exalted, the children of men are put to rebuke.

Heb. The wicked walk round about :

As a raising up are the dejections of the sons of men.

(Or otherwise) :—

The wicked shall get them away,

When He Who *was* the scorn of the sons of men is exalted.

LXX. The ungodly walk in a circle round about.

According to Thy height, Thou hast multiplied the sons of men.

When deceivers and seducers abound, and are wandering at their own will in all their various ways of error, the love of many waxes cold. There comes a season of dejection, and sorrow, and rebuke, for the Church of God; and yet even that time of humiliation and trial is a time of mercy, and will turn

to her future exaltation. The trial of faith worketh patience; and the proving the faithfulness of the Church, through the providence of the Most High, becomes often the multiplication of her children. Christ the Lord of all was once the ‘despised and rejected’ of men; it was through humility and suffering that He entered into His glory; yet they who once compassed Him about with unrighteous hatred shall hereafter flee before His face, when He is set down upon His judgment-throne.

This Psalm is, as the sixth, “upon Sheminith.” The design of David in writing it was to warn those who are tempted in their minds to unbelief by the general falsehood and deceit around them, to remember that God’s words are undeceivable, and true for time and for eternity; while they who are wilful liars and hypocrites shall certainly meet the reward of their false words. The object of the Psalm is to guard the Church against being driven from the truth, not by open violence of action, but by arrogant, and specious, and untruthful arguments and expressions of opinion. The translation of the last verse is, as will be seen, a matter of much difficulty.

PSALM xiii. *Usque quo, Domine?*

1. How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord, for ever : how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me ?

There are times in the spiritual life of every earnest soul in which it is utterly oppressed with darkness, and dreariness, and misery. It has to sojourn in the valley of the shadow of death. It feels, indeed, a want of God, but cannot find Him; it feels its infinite need of a Saviour, but it cannot see Him. It is waiting and longing for God to

look upon its pain, and to aid it in its conflict; and He does not. He seems to have forgotten. His delay seems to lengthen time into eternity. He seems to have turned away His face, and to have left the struggling spirit to itself.

2. How long shall I seek counsel in my soul, and be so vexed in my heart : how long shall mine enemies triumph over me ?

The soul asks of itself, and can give no answer. It has no help in itself, no wisdom, no truth, no holiness; and it is the sense of its want of these which is the very source of its hopelessness and anguish. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness' and its own sin; but does not know its own hope and life. Then comes on a state of deeper dejection, of utter prostration and abasement, a sense of being conquered by sin and yet hating sin, from which there seems no outlet and no escape, but only the four-times repeated cry—How long ? How long ?

3. Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God : lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death.

He 'ought always to pray, and not to faint,' who wishes to be heard. God is not a God Who cares not for the creatures He has made; each struggling soul must say, He is *my* Father and *my* God, He will therefore consider my helplessness and woe, and will hear me. Hungry, weary, blind, the soul sits waiting, like the poor man begging at the gates

of Jericho with one cry ever upon his lips,—‘Lord, that my eyes may be opened.’ His prayer was granted, and he saw the ‘Light of Light,’ Whom David had desired to see, and had not seen. If the soul which is fainting in the agony of spiritual death cry like him, it will be heard too. The eyes of faith will be opened and it will see Him Who is our Light, our Comforter, our Health, our Life; ‘for He that believeth in Him shall never die.’

4. Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him : for if I be cast down, they that trouble me will rejoice at it.

When the eyes of the soul are lightened, it can see the cause of its desolation : ‘an enemy hath done this.’ It is not that God forgets us, but that we forget Him. The truth, which was darkened before, shines out then clear and plain. The accuser had bidden us believe that our God was an austere task-master, whereas He ever is an all-loving Father. He had drawn the darkness of our sins like a veil before our eyes, so that we could not see the face of Him Who is all-holy and all-true ; and we thought that He had hidden His face from us, while we were hiding ours from Him. While we know not that it is so, the foe prevails against us. If we are troubled with doubt of God’s mercy, and are cast down in our darkness and tribulation of heart, then so far he rejoices that his end is gained.

5. But my trust is in Thy mercy : and my heart is joyful in Thy salvation.

As soon as the Christian knows that it is the enemy who has been tempting him, and that God has not forgotten him, the victory is gained. His soul has found the trust it sought, not in itself, but in the mercy of his God. His heart casts away its self-torture and vexation, and exults, not in its own victory, but in its Redeemer's salvation. He looks no longer back upon the darkness and anguish of the past, but rather looks gladly onward to the present mercies which are ready for him, and to the salvation which is shining in the future.

6. I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with me : yea, I will praise the Name of the Lord most Highest.

Heb. I will sing unto the Lord,

Because He hath dealt bountifully with me.

The last line of the Psalm is only found in the LXX., and seems added from Psalm vii. 18.

So in the light of the Saviour's countenance all things are changed, all things—except the eternal love of God ! For doubt comes trust ; for vexation comes holy joy ; the cry ‘How long?’ becomes a song of praise ; the suspicion of the hiding of God's face becomes the certainty of His loving dealings. It is not the enemy of souls and the accuser of God to us who has prevailed. But we have been delivered with Him and through Him Who has drunk deep of the cup of all our trials, and felt

all our desolation ; Whose soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, that we might feel sure of His Father's mercy, and confide in His salvation. He Who is the Lord most Highest suffered and overcame, that we in Him might suffer, and in Him conquer too.

This Psalm of David bears the usual title "to the Chief Musician." It was, no doubt, written by David in some deep perplexity and danger, spiritual rather than temporal ; most probably in his early life, while he was under persecution from Saul. But we must remember that it was a peculiar feature of the first covenant, that temporal blessings were made conditional on obedience and righteous conduct ; and misfortunes and unhappinesses were expressly the consequences of disobedience and wrong-doing : and so to an Israelite the thoughts of misery, and loneliness, and pain were immediately suggestive of wickedness and unholiness. The temporal dealings of God with him were always significant of His spiritual government. In the case of David, therefore, the sorrows and distresses of his early life must often have made him examine his own conduct, and repent of his sins ; and have led him on, as his years increased, to see that earthly troubles are not always the burdens they seem to be, and that the sorrow that sin brings is far less bearable than the sorrow that misfortune brings. By some this Psalm has been looked upon as the complaint of the Israelitish Church in her bondage and darkness, praying for the coming of the true Light—the Messiah ; and the fourfold cry of "How long?" has seemed to have reference to the fourfold captivity of the Jewish people—the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Grecian, and the Roman.

PSALM xiv. *Dixit insipiens.*

1. THE fool hath said in his heart : There is no God.

The one eternal fact that God is, and that He is a righteous King, which is the ground of all hope to the repenting sinner, and of all trust and comfort to

him who is striving to obey Him, is, on the other hand, a source of confusion and constant perplexity to the careless and unbelieving. The thought of a righteous King always over them and close to them, judging their conduct, and condemning their folly and self-will, is unbearable to them. In their own secret souls they will prefer anything to such a thought. They will not, indeed, in words maintain that there is no such God; but in their lives and deeds they plainly shew what the secret wish and impression of their hearts is. 'In works they deny Him.' Yet 'I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have none other gods but Me,' is the root of all truth, the spring of all knowledge, and the foundation of all law. For there is no wisdom like the belief in God, and no folly like the unbelief in Him.

2. They are corrupt, and become abominable in their doings : there is none that doeth good, no not one.

Heb. They are corrupt, they are abominable in their doings :
There is none that doeth good.

Where there is no belief in a righteous God, there can only be one result—the loss of all that is righteous and all that is good. It ever has been so where the law of all laws, There is a God, has been forgotten or denied. It was so with the sinners before the flood, when 'all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth.' It was so in those evil days when Israel rebelled against David,

and followed Absalom. It was so in a still higher degree when the Prince of Life came into the world, and was 'by wicked hands crucified and slain.' And it will be so in those latter times, of which the Spirit speaketh, when 'that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.'

3. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men : to see if there were any that would understand, and seek after God.

It is at those very seasons when the fools are trusting in their hearts, that there is no righteous King of the world; when men generally are becoming corrupt in their principles and abominable in their doings; when there seems nothing right or true left anywhere,—it is then that God manifests Himself. He is not unmindful, though He is long-suffering. It is in times like those that He searches, as it were, the world, and then, if there be any that understand His all-continuing holiness, and seek after Him and His ways, they are manifested before Him. So it was at Christ's first coming, when He came down from heaven to seek and to save a fast-perishing world. So it will be, we seem to learn from prophecy, before He comes again: there will be a falling away from truth and right; there will be a searching time of trial for His Church.

4. But they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable : there is none that doeth good, no not one.

This is the punishment of unbelief. They who have ‘an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God,’ go on to more ungodliness. There is a law which prevails in evil-doing, as in right-doing, that they who have begun must, unless grace stop them, go on. Sin draws on sin ; each step they take is one step more away from the living God, until they become reprobate and altogether lost,—for who can save them who will not be saved by God?—and that sentence of most fearful judgment goes forth against them, ‘He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.’

5. Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues have they deceived : the poison of asps is under their lips.

This verse, and the two following, are not in the Hebrew, but are found only in the LXX., and in Romans iii. 13—18. But the first portion of this verse is from Ps. v. 10.

6. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness : their feet are swift to shed blood.

7. Destruction and unhappiness is in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes.

This is the history of men apart from grace. They are utterly lost to truth, and love, and peace, and reverence. The unbelief in which they are sunk is death and corruption to their soul, even as the grave is to the body. Their words and thoughts are more fatal to each other than the speediest and most subtle poison. They make themselves to be the adopted children of the evil one, 'a generation of vipers;' and their mouth is filled with revilings and with malice, even as the serpent's with the dust on which he feeds. They become murderers in hatred and malice, if not in deed; and they join themselves in spirit to them who crucified the Son of God, and pierce Him with their sins afresh. Their ways of sin are ways of misery, and their ending is perdition. The repose of an untroubled conscience and a quiet mind is utterly unknown to them; and why? Because they are void of that wisdom, whose paths are peace, and the beginning of which is the fear of the all-righteous God.

8. Have they no knowledge, that they are all such workers of mischief: eating up my people as it were bread, and call not upon the Lord?

It is not that they cannot know, but that they will not know: their eyes are blinded and their hearts are darkened by the multitude of their sins. Their pleasure is in leading others, not to good, but to evil; and the perversion of souls is as it

were their daily food. They can have no hope of grace, because they take no heed of prayer: they have forgotten how to pray.

9. There were they brought in great fear, even where no fear was : for God is in the generation of the righteous.

They have no fear of God, but they will not therefore be free from fear. Fright, and terror of conscience, and trembling of heart, are the natural fruit of their deeds. They shall be stricken with intense dread at that which should be only a cause of joy and hope,—the manifestation of God in His holiness. This fear the right-doers shall never feel, for their Saviour shall be ever with them. He Who is present where two or three are gathered in His name, shall much more be with the whole Church of His faithful people.

10. As for you, ye have made a mock at the counsel of the poor : because he putteth his trust in the Lord.

Yea, even they who boasted that they had Abraham to their father, and looked upon themselves as the peculiar people of God, fell from grace into darkness and sin, even as others. They stood around the cross of Him Who, being rich, for our sakes became poor, and mocked and scorned at His humiliation. ‘He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him,’ was the salutation of Israel after the flesh to their thorn-crowned King.

There is no difference : they were no better than the heathen with whom they joined ; for both Jews and Gentiles have by their works proved of all, ‘that they are all under sin,’ apart from grace.

11. Who shall give salvation unto Israel out of Sion ? When the Lord turneth the captivity of His people : then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

All have sinned ; all require mercy ; all need a Saviour. The one great want of man is a Redeemer to pardon him, and a King to govern him. Who can give this but God Himself, and who can be this but God Himself ? This He was : He turned Himself to the captivity of His people, and redeemed them from the bondage in which they groaned. He became to them the Way, from destruction and unhappiness,—the Truth, amid the deceitfulness of their own hearts and tongues,—the Life, in their blood-guiltiness and corruption. In Him shall the Church of them whom He has redeemed be consoled with an everlasting comfort, and rejoice with an everlasting joy.

This Psalm describes the natural state of man when he is exposed to the temptations of the evil one, and unrestrained by grace. It is brought forward by St. Paul (Rom. iii. 10—12,) in proof of the universal corruption of all, both Jews and Gentiles. It was written by David in the patient expectation of a salvation that God would provide to deliver man from the state of sin and death to which of himself he was ever tending. The same thoughts are repeated again with some few variations in the fifty-third Psalm.

Morning Prayer.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM XV. *Domine, quis habitabit?*

1. LORD, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle : or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill ?

This is the question of questions, which we must ask, not of ourselves nor of other men, but only of the Lord,—Who are they that are the elect? Who are the true members of His Church while it is visible and militant here on earth, shifting like the tabernacle of old from one region to another of the wilderness of this world? And who are they who shall abide in unending rest, when their labours are finished, among that unseen but yet triumphant band who make up the Church of the redeemed in heaven?

2. Even he, that leadeth an uncorrupt life : and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.

3. He that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbour : and hath not slandered his neighbour.

The Lord Himself will answer it,—‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ God’s elect have ever His mark upon them, ‘holiness and blamelessness.’ He that hath nought to do with the devil and his works, who hath set on one side the pomps and vanity of the world, whose life is uncorrupt from the

sinful lusts of the flesh, and who is walking in the way of God's commandments,—he is a true member of the Church on earth, a citizen of Sion. He that not only has a will to do what is right, but also is determined to be sincere in what he says; who is both true and just in all his dealings; who has borne no malice in his heart, nor allowed evil speaking or slander on his tongue,—in him can we see the evident signs of the grace which sanctifies the elect.

4. He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes : and maketh much of them that fear the Lord.

Heb. In his eyes the reprobate is not esteemed ;
But he honours them that fear the Lord.

Such an one will not rely upon his own wisdom, nor plume himself upon his own knowledge, nor walk by his own carnal will. Christ will be to him all in all; and his own fancies and human judgments will be as nothing. He will not say to another member of the mystical Body of the Lord, whether his place be higher or lower than his own, 'I have no need of thee.' The love of Christ within him will form at once a bond of communion with all who love Him too; and will be a gulf of separation between him and those in whom Christ is not.

5. He that sweareth unto his neighbour, and disappointeth him not : though it were to his own hindrance.

Heb. He swears to his own harm, and changes not.

6. He that hath not given his money upon usury : nor taken reward against the innocent.

There is ever before his eyes in all his dealings the thought of Him Who covenanted to redeem our souls, and disappointed not them who trusted in Him; though to keep His promise, made in the beginning, cost Him agony, and blood-shedding, and death. He will not let the desire of money quench love within him. He knows that ‘covetousness, which is idolatry,’ may lead him on, even as it led the false Apostle, to say—‘What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?’

7. Whoso doeth these things : shall never fall.

Whoso thus, through grace, strives to copy in his deeds and words Him Who is the perfect pattern of righteousness and truth, shall indeed dwell in the tabernacle of God in this life, and rest upon His holy hill throughout eternity. Some have begun, and have not continued. Demas entered into the tabernacle, but would not dwell therein, loving better this present world. Judas fell from before the very gates of heaven. Satan was in heaven, yet he kept not his first estate. But he who lives as if a life of holiness were to do all, and prays as if prayer were to do all, and believes as if faith were to do all, he shall be strengthened in his Master’s strength, and shall finally sit down with

the elect in that high abode where there is no more falling and no more fear.

The six preceding Psalms have been describing the character and fate of the wicked; this Psalm describes the character of the righteous. It appears to have been written by David after the Ark had been brought to Mount Sion, (2 Sam. vi. 12,) in order that he might put the people of Jerusalem, and specially the Priests and the Levites who served in the sanctuary, in remembrance of how much righteousness of life was required in them who were brought so near to God. It is very properly appointed for Holy Thursday; for He Who on that day entered as our Great High Priest into the tabernacle not made with hands, alone perfectly fulfilled those duties towards God and towards man which the Ten Commandments of the Law, which are paraphrased in this Psalm, declare.

PSALM xvi. *Conserva me, Domine.*

1. PRESERVE me, O God : for in Thee have I put my trust.

Thus did the Saviour pray in that nature of ours which for us He took from us. He cast Himself upon Him Who preserveth the suffering, and consoleth the sorrowing, and giveth life to the dead. In Him had He ever trusted, not only in life, but also in death : yea, Christ the Lord and the Head of all, the pattern of perfect righteousness, and the source of perfect holiness, trusted not in Himself, but in the Father Who sent Him.

2. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord : Thou art my God, my goods are nothing unto Thee.

Heb. Thou hast said unto the Lord,
Thou art my Lord.
My goodness is not without Thee.

LXX. I have said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord ;
For Thou hast no need of my good things.

3. All my delight is upon the saints, that are in the earth : and upon such as excel in virtue.

He Who was the eternal Son yet came not into the world for God's sake, but for man's sake, that He might reconcile the world unto the Father. His death and passion, His patience and His truth, were indeed not without God, but they were for the good of fallen man. It was for the elect that He suffered and endured, 'that He might purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works;' in them hath He rejoiced, and them hath He loved with an everlasting love, and 'for their sakes sanctified He Himself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.' They shall be priests and kings in that nobility which our nature gained through Christ.

4. But they that run after another god : shall have great trouble.

5. Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer : neither make mention of their names within my lips.

They who put their trust in anything else than God, and who look to somewhat else as a Saviour and Preserver, will be very woefully and bitterly deceived. Their unhappiness will be great. It is impossible to serve two masters. We are not able

to divide either our duty or our faith. 'We cannot drink the Cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; we cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils.' They who become idolaters either in act or in spirit, have refused Christ for their High Priest, and His atonement and intercession can be no longer offered up for them.

6. The Lord Himself is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup : Thou shalt maintain my lot.

7. The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground : yea, I have a goodly heritage.

He Who is the One High Priest hath not an earthly inheritance, but God Himself and the infinity of God is His portion ; 'All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them.' The inheritance of the world which His Father had prepared for Him He received, for that He refused not to drink of that cup which His Father had given Him to drink. Therefore is He ever able to save His people, and to bless His heritage.

8. I will thank the Lord for giving me warning : my reins also chasten me in the night-season.

He Who was as God the fountain of all wisdom, yea, wisdom itself, as man was endued by God with wisdom; and in that wisdom His steadfast prayer was, 'Preserve Me, O God.' And still in that double darkness of night and agony, when the

warning of His passion made His soul exceeding sorrowful unto death, He did not go back, but delivered all His cause into His Father's hand,—‘Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.’

9. I have set God always before me : for He is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall.

The only-begotten Son coming into that world where all things pass away, removed not His eyes from Him Who alone abideth unmoved for ever. In all His poverty and humiliation here the Father was ever with Him on His right hand, as a succour and defence, even as in His glory and exaltation He is upon the right hand of the Father as a King and Judge. Therefore did He overcome the world.

10. Wherefore my heart was glad, and my glory rejoiced : my flesh also shall rest in hope.

Therefore, too, in the mightiness of that victory did He cast away at once the punishment of the whole race of man,—‘Unto dust shalt thou return.’ He triumphed even in the coldness of death, and His glory shone amid the shadows of the grave; for His flesh did not return to dust. It rested there for a little while, not to be touched by corruption, or to become the prey of the worm, but in the speedy hope of being raised again, and clothed with incorruption and immortality.

11. For why? Thou shalt not leave my

soul in hell : neither shalt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.

The souls indeed of all the righteous dead are in the hands of God ; but it was only the sacred Body of Him Whom even the demons owned to be the Holy One of God, that was not suffered to see decay. The Patriarch David indeed 'is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption.' Yea, He Whom God raised saw the grave indeed, but saw it not to be holden of it. 'He descended into hell,' but His soul was not left nor abandoned there. Death could not destroy Him Who was to be the Destroyer of death ; corruption durst not come nigh that 'last Adam, Who was made a quickening Spirit.'

12. Thou shalt shew me the path of life ; in Thy presence is the fulness of joy : and at Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.

The Incarnate Word, therefore, rose again from the dead, shewing us by His deeds and teaching us by His words, that way which leadeth unto life, and by which life comes, which the Father had made known to Him. He opened, once for all, the path which leads from the grave to heaven. Man, once

driven forth from the presence of God through the unrighteousness of Adam, now enters it again in the righteousness of Christ. The joy of innocence once lost is more than made up by the glory gained by grace. In Christ we enter heaven. The pleasures of time which tempt us are there seen set on God's left hand; but at His right hand, and in Him Who is at His right hand, are the pleasures of eternity, the fulness of heavenly joy, and of love unchangeable.

The title of this Psalm is "Michtam of David." The word "Michtam" is rendered by the LXX., "an engraving on a pillar or monument;" others have translated it "golden," and have supposed that the Psalms called by that name were engraved in letters of gold on the walls of the temple or some other conspicuous place; other translations of the word are "a secret, or a song of mysteries," or otherwise, "a beautiful and very lovely song." St. Peter, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, plainly teaches us that David in this Psalm speaks of Christ, and of His descent into hell, and resurrection from the dead, (Acts ii. 25—31;) and St. Paul also, preaching in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia, brings forward the same verses of this Psalm in proof of the same truth, (Acts xiii. 34—37). It was probably written, as were the other Psalms called Michtam, (see Psalm lvi.), during his persecution by Saul, when he was in constant danger, and could only preserve his life by taking refuge in secret hiding-places, or among the heathen nations.

PSALM xvii. *Exaudi, Domine.*

1. HEAR the right, O Lord, consider my complaint : and hearken unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.

2. Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence : and let Thine eyes look upon the thing that is equal.

Man cannot be sinless ; he can be sincere. Our prayers must be truthful, as well as earnest, if we would have God hear and answer. ‘ All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.’ We must, therefore, in all we ask, as in all we do, know and feel that we are in His presence, and that He tries and judges each word we speak to Him, whether it be true and unfeigned, or whether it be deceitful and spoken in hypocrisy.

3. Thou hast proved and visited mine heart in the night-season ; Thou hast tried me, and shalt find no wickedness in me : for I am utterly purposed that my mouth shall not offend.

‘ We know that God heareth not sinners ; but if any man be a worshipper of Him and doeth His will, him He heareth.’ The Almighty Judge, Who seeth in the darkness as in the day, can alone decide whether our evening prayer be an acceptable sacrifice, or a false and polluted offering. If our heart be true, and our words be pure, and our resolutions high and holy, and free from earthly dross, He Who heard and answered the Son of Man in His night-prayer in Gethsemane, will hear and answer us in our night-season of sadness or of sin, and cleanse our souls through Him.

4. Because of men’s works, that are done against the words of Thy lips : I have kept me from the ways of the destroyer.

Heb. As for the doings of man :
By the words of Thy lips
I observe the ways of the violent.

5. O hold Thou up my goings in Thy paths : that my footsteps slip not.

Man's ways, when he follows his own disobedient and headstrong will, ever lead unto destruction. They must be searched out by the light of the Word of God and prayer; and so shall he that would observe the law and revealed will of his Maker, be kept from that self-confusion and ruin which must always follow the transgression of God's commandments. He must ever hold fast the spirit of the Redeemer's prayer,—'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

6. I have called upon Thee, O God, for Thou shalt hear me : incline Thine ear to me, and hearken unto my words.

7. Shew Thy marvellous loving-kindness, Thou that art the Saviour of them which put their trust in Thee : from such as resist Thy right hand.

8. Keep me as the apple of an eye : hide me under the shadow of Thy wings,

9. From the ungodly that trouble me : mine enemies compass me round about to take away my soul.

Experience only can give us confidence in prayer. We know that God will hear, because He has heard.

He that has prayed fervently and sincerely cannot but have learnt how God does, as it were, single and choose out the most wonderful tokens of His mercy, the richest gifts of His grace, and bestow them in answer to the cravings of a pure and faithful soul. In the fulness of that love which passeth all understanding, and which was manifested in the coming of Christ the Saviour, not only does He defend from all dangers ghostly and bodily, and save us from our spiritual foes when they seek our soul, and from everlasting death ; but He will make us His own peculiar care, as the elect members of His beloved Son, and will hide us under the shadow of that Cross upon which the extended hands of the Lord of life were nailed.

10. They are inclosed in their own fat : and their mouth speaketh proud things.

11. They lie waiting in our way on every side : turning their eyes down to the ground ;

12. Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey : and as it were a lion's whelp, lurking in secret places.

Selfishness, pride, treachery, and cruelty are the marks of the enemies of God and of man. ' Behold,' saith the prophet, ' this was the iniquity of Sodom,—pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness ; neither did they strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy.' Such both do evil, and cause evil ; they set snares for others' souls ; they are like hunters watching for their prey, and taking caution that

it does not escape them. They are filled with the spirit of their father the devil, who is like a lion, ever raging and yet ever treacherous; 'and the lusts of their father they will do.'

13. Up, Lord, disappoint him, and cast him down : deliver my soul from the ungodly, which is a sword of Thine ;

14. From the men of Thy hand, O Lord, from the men, I say, and from the evil world : which have their portion in this life, whose bellies Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure.

15. They have children at their desire : and leave the rest of their substance for their babes.

Heb. Arise, O Lord, go before his face, cast him down :

Deliver my soul from the wicked, Thy sword.

From the men who are instruments in Thy hand,
O Lord,

From the men of this world, whose portion is in
this life,

For whom Thou fillest their body with Thy treasure.

They have sons in fulness,

And leave the residue to their children.

LXX. Up, Lord, surprise them, and bring them on their
knees :

Deliver my soul, which is Thy sword, from the impious,
From the enemies of Thy hand :

O Lord, Who dismisest from the earth,

Divide them in their life,

For their belly has been filled with Thy hidden things :

They have been satiated with unclean meat,

And have given the remainder to their little ones.

These will God finally deprive of the things they

set their heart on. Their prosperity is but for a time ; it is no token of His lasting favour. They are instruments in the hand of the Almighty, for the trial of the obedient and the proving of those whom He is seeking to draw from the world unto Himself. They blindly accomplish the task He sets them to ; and think only that they are doing their own will. They lay up treasures on earth, and know not that they shall become sources of cankering misery to them, and ‘a witness against them that shall eat their flesh as it were fire.’ They will to receive their good things in this life, and to leave them to their children after them, forgetting that ‘to live in pleasure upon the earth and to be wanton,’ is to live a life which is not life, but is rather a spiritual death.

16. But as for me, I will behold Thy presence in righteousness : and when I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.

This is the blessing of continual prayer—that it makes us abide, and makes us feel that we are abiding, in the continual presence of God. It weans us from the wish for a portion in this life, and from the longing to be satisfied with this world’s treasure, and makes us trust in the unseen guidance and ever-present righteousness of God, which is here seen but dimly, but which the future shall fully satisfy us with. They who pray are taught by the very act of prayer that their life is not bounded by this life : for they believe in the resurrection of

the dead when the Lord cometh in judgment ; and ‘ they know that, when He shall appear, they shall be like Him ; for they shall see Him as He is.’

This Psalm is entitled “ a Prayer of David ;” it sets out most clearly the true spirit and tone of mind with which we should offer prayer to God. Sincerity, truthfulness, and right intention, are spoken of as the requisites for acceptable prayer. It was probably written by David during his persecution by Saul ; and the character he gives of his enemies corresponds to that of those who then misrepresented his actions and plotted his death. From the appeal to God in the second and third verses, some have considered that this prayer could only properly be uttered by Christ Himself ; and that it is so far prophetic of Him ; and the Jews have repeated a tradition that David was allowed to fall into sin on account of his presumption in so appealing to God. But it is clear that the Psalms speak, not of perfect righteousness and purity, but of that sincerity and uprightness of word and deed which man can reach to, and without which no prayer is heard. Verses 8 and 10 have an obvious reference to the song of Moses in Deut. xxxii. 10, 11, 15 ; and verses 13, 14, 15, though their general meaning is clear, yet present great difficulties to the translator in some of their expressions.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM xviii. *Diligam Te, Domine.*

1. I WILL love Thee, O Lord, my strength ; the Lord is my stony rock, and my defence : my Saviour, my God, and my might, in Whom I will trust, my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my refuge.

2. I will call upon the Lord, Which is worthy to be praised : so shall I be safe from mine enemies.

Since from God all that man is and all that

he has comes, to God should all that he is and all that he has be given. There is but one thing of value that we have, and that is our love; let us give that to Him Who is everything to us. Without Him and His strength we are but weakness; without His support we are most helpless; without Him, as a Saviour, we are but lost; without His Godhead for a ground of confidence, we could have no faith; without Him as a constant protector and defender, we must be exposed to every attack; and He only is our refuge from our sins and from ourselves. In trial and sorrow we have but to praise God,—not crying to Him merely, but coming to Him as most kind and worthy to be praised in all He does; and in that very moment the evil will abate, and the temptation to despair will be overcome. So, too, shall we be joined in closer union to Him Who said, in the days of His flesh, even as we say, ‘I will put my trust in Him.’

3. The sorrows of death compassed me :
and the overflowings of ungodliness made me
afraid.

Heb. The cords of death entangled me :
The torrents of Belial terrified me.

4. The pains of hell came about me : the
snares of death overtook me.

And we may thus praise God with full hope, and even assurance, of deliverance from Him, in the most mournful hours of misery and distress, and even in the times when death seems to be close to us, and the

memories of those sins we have done, or have been led into, come rushing upon us like an overwhelming flood. It may be that then the gloom of the unseen world will hang fearfully about us, and there will be no escape from the hand of death; but there will still be aid and consolation in the knowledge that not only did the Son of David pass through the same sorrow, pain, and fear, but 'that God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it;' and that in Him all who believe in Him shall be raised up and delivered too.

5. In my trouble I will call upon the Lord : and complain unto my God.

6. So shall He hear my voice out of His holy temple : and my complaint shall come before Him, it shall enter even into His ears.

David called upon God in all the trouble that came upon him, and his prayer was heard. The Lord of David also 'offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.' So shall each faithful heart, that in the time of tribulation and in the hour of death cries for deliverance unto Him Who dwelleth in the temple not made with hands, be heard and answered. Every single cry of sorrow or prayer of penitence that comes before the Father in the name of Jesus Christ shall find most sure acceptance.

7. The earth trembled and quaked : the very foundations also of the hills shook, and were removed, because He was wroth.

8. There went a smoke out in His presence : and a consuming fire out of His mouth, so that coals were kindled at it.

For He Who dwelleth in that high abode changeth not : His power is ever the same ; His judgments are ever the same ; His love is ever the same. The proclamation of His eternal will is ever being made, that He is God ; and, that right shall be, and that wrong shall not be. When that will was audibly declared of old, ‘there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the Mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud ; and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire ; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole Mount quaked greatly.’ Shall then the earth tremble, and the foundations of the mountains shake at the revelation of His will, and we things of clay be careless and unmoved ? Shall the rocks glow like coals in the intensity of His power, and our hearts not burn within us as He speaks, but be cold and hard as ever ? Let us ‘see that we refuse not Him that speaketh.’

9. He bowed the heavens also, and came down : and it was dark under His feet.

10. He rode upon the cherubims, and did

fly : He came flying upon the wings of the wind.

11. He made darkness His secret place : His pavilion round about Him with dark water, and thick clouds to cover Him.

Thus did heaven come down to earth, and God revealed His law to man. He did not reveal Himself: awe and mystery still surrounded Him. The mightiest and loftiest of created beings were but beneath His feet; the angels, and the elements they rule, were but the passive instruments of His will. He continued to abide in that unapproachable light, which to human eyes is utter darkness; His majesty was shrouded in the shadows of the elder covenant. He spake in that past time by the prophets, in parables and dark sayings, and solemn types.

12. At the brightness of His presence His clouds removed : hail-stones, and coals of fire.

13. The Lord also thundered out of heaven, and the Highest gave His thunder : hail-stones, and coals of fire.

14. He sent out His arrows, and scattered them : He cast forth lightnings, and destroyed them.

At length God revealed Himself. In the last days He spake unto us by His Son, Who is 'the brightness of His glory and the express image of His

Person.' With Him came despair to the hardened sinner, and grace to the repenting. In Him prophecies were accomplished, and the law fulfilled. But the marvels at the fulfilling were not less than those at the giving of the Law; rather they were greater and more glorious. The darkness around the Cross from the sixth hour unto the ninth was not less fearful than that on Sinai; the earthquake which rent the rocks and opened the graves was not less awful than that which shook the Mount; the cry of the angel who rolled back the stone from the sepulchre, 'whose countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow,' was not less startling than the voices from amid the darkness and the cloud,—'He is not here, for He is risen.' The rushing mighty wind and the descending tongues of fire were more wondrous in their effect, and intenser in their influence, than the 'thunders and lightnings' of the proclaiming the Law. God's voice of old shook the earth; but then was His promise fulfilled which said, 'Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.'

15. The springs of waters were seen, and the foundations of the round world were discovered, at Thy chiding, O Lord : at the blasting of the breath of Thy displeasure.

Then was wrought a mightier sign than the parting of the Red Sea at the deliverance from Egypt, or the dividing the waters of Jordan at the entering into the promised land. The eternal Son of God

passed through the waters of death, He descended into the lower parts of the earth. He rebuked death, and was the destruction of the power of the grave: however mighty their obscurity and gloom might be, the Lord from on high was mightier.

16. He shall send down from on high to fetch me : and shall take me out of many waters.

17. He shall deliver me from my strongest enemy, and from them which hate me : for they are too mighty for me.

In Him, Who hath so wonderfully and so awfully shewn forth His purpose concerning man, Who hath thus given him both knowledge of His holy will and grace to keep and do it, we may most safely and entirely trust. He Who hath come down, not once only, for man's sake, will ever be ready to save those who ask Him for His aid from the tossing of 'the waves of this troublesome world,' from the dark and deep waters of sin and death, which, many though they be, cannot quench His love. He will lift up a standard for us, even His love, against that 'enemy which comes in like a flood' upon our souls; for though he be stronger than us, there is One stronger than he.

18. They prevented me in the day of my trouble : but the Lord was my upholder.

19. He brought me forth also into a place of liberty : He brought me forth, even because He had a favour unto me.

In the time of weakness and in the hour of death do those unseen foes most crowd around us: He only Who is our most worthy Judge eternal can uphold us, that for no pains of death we fall from Him. He Who raised up Jesus from the dead will raise up also the members of His Church; He will bring them to those heavenly mansions which He hath prepared for them; He will lead His own through all that can hurt or terrify them, safe even to the end, for He hath loved them with an everlasting love.

20. The Lord shall reward me after my righteous dealing : according to the cleanness of my hands shall He recompense me.

21. Because I have kept the ways of the Lord : and have not forsaken my God, as the wicked doth.

22. For I have an eye unto all His laws : and will not cast out His commandments from me.

23. I was also uncorrupt before Him : and eschewed mine own wickedness.

This is the result of the experience of God's saints,—that the way of obedience is the way of salvation; that purity of heart is immortal peace. There was One Who kept all the ways of God, and fully obeyed all His laws, and in Whom He was well pleased; and to follow His steps is to share in His salvation. The way not to depart from God,

as the wicked do, is to watch His revealed will, and to hold fast by His commandments; so shall we in no violent degree fall from grace, and so we shall be saved from the natural evil of our hearts.

24. Therefore shall the Lord reward me after my righteous dealing : and according unto the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight.

Yea, this is a certain and eternal fact, that they who have done right shall not be as they who have done wrong. Doing right will meet with God's favour and love, will meet with His approval, as shewn in the course of His providence. They who have kept from sin, so far as they have kept from sin shall be able to taste and see the loving-kindness of God. Not to do wrong will ever be its own exceeding great reward in the sight of Him, Whose everlasting will it is, that wrong should not be done.

25. With the holy Thou shalt be holy : and with a perfect man Thou shalt be perfect.

26. With the clean Thou shalt be clean : and with the froward Thou shalt learn frowardness.

27. For Thou shalt save the people that are in adversity : and shalt bring down the high looks of the proud.

Thus do we best gain the knowledge of the Ruler of all. They who in their degree and to their power

seek after holiness, and integrity, and purity, in what they do, and say, and think, shall see more plainly, and love more deeply, Him Who is perfect holiness, and goodness, and purity. They are of Him and in Him, Whose all-perfect Spirit is in them; and no earthly sorrow can sully their trust and peace. While with the disobedient and profane God is, as it were, in a continual struggle; He seems to be in truth an austere Master; and the remembrance of Him comes to their minds only to annoy, to humiliate, and to crush them.

28. Thou also shalt light my candle : the Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light.

Thus does God give us light—by drawing us nearer to the Fount of light, to Him Who is ‘Light of Light.’ None but He can make our darkness to be light; as none but ourselves can make His light darkness. He kindles a spark of His uncreated and immortal light within our dark and dying hearts; and in its clearness all things change: the shadows of earth vanish, the things eternal become more plain; and the saying is fulfilled in us,—‘Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.’

29. For in Thee I shall discomfit an host of men : and with the help of my God I shall leap over the wall.

As Christ is our Light, so is He our Strength.

He will conquer in us, as we have conquered in Him. We shall be victors over the multitude of our own sins and ignorances, even as David discomfited his enemies in battle array; we shall despise and overcome the stony wall of the tomb, which our sins built up and made so strong,—even as David ascended into the ramparts and subdued the citadel of the Jebusites,—in and through Him Who once defeated the malice of His murderers by His patient love, and Who scaled the battlements of the grave by the glory of the Father.

30. The way of God is an undefiled way : the word of the Lord also is tried in the fire ; He is the defender of all them that put their trust in Him.

31. For who is God, but the Lord : or who hath any strength, except our God ?

These things are needful for us, that we may come unto that One Almighty Father and eternal God Who hath made heaven and earth,—obedience to the commandments which He has given, faith in the truths which He has revealed, use of the means of grace which He has appointed. Thus only can we arrive at the true knowledge of Him Whom truly to know is everlasting life, Whose way is holiness, Whose word is more precious than refined gold, Whose aid and defence is never failing.

32. It is God, that girdeth me with strength of war : and maketh my way perfect.

33. He maketh my feet like hart's feet : and setteth me up on high.

34. He teacheth mine hands to fight : and mine arms shall break even a bow of steel.

It is only in Him that the Christian can manfully fight against his foes ; He only can make him perfect in that way of love in which no fear can linger. In Him only can we pass safely and swiftly, like a hart, among the thorny brakes and through the entangling thickets of this world's wilderness ; and by Him only can we indeed fulfil the precept—'Set your affection on things above.' He only giveth that mouth and wisdom which no adversaries are able to gainsay or resist, and that power by which we 'can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth us.'

35. Thou hast given me the defence of Thy salvation : Thy right hand also shall hold me up, and Thy loving correction shall make me great.

36. Thou shalt make room enough under me for to go : that my footsteps shall not slide.

37. I will follow upon mine enemies, and overtake them : neither will I turn again till I have destroyed them.

38. I will smite them, that they shall not be able to stand : but fall under my feet.

He Who once fought for us, and overcame in us,

is our ever-present salvation and constant support and guide. The light afflictions and chastenings which He lays upon us, work out for us by their loving discipline a higher degree of victory and glory. In that one holy Church into which He has called us, there is a way opened for us to Himself which is most secure and plain, if our feet slide not from it. There in obedience and self-denial we can struggle with our unworthy desires and carnal lusts, and take no rest till we have utterly beaten them down and cast them out, and made them give place to purity and heavenly love.

39. Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle : Thou shalt throw down mine enemies under me.

40. Thou hast made mine enemies also to turn their backs upon me : and I shall destroy them that hate me.

41. They shall cry, but there shall be none to help them : yea, even unto the Lord shall they cry, but He shall not hear them.

42. I will beat them as small as the dust before the wind : I will cast them out as the clay in the streets.

We may contend, but it is Christ Who achieves the conquest. Man may wage the fight against sin, but it is grace that wins it. It is only in the armour with which He girds us, and by the weapons which He gives us, that we can stand

in the evil day of temptation. All that offends God in us must be destroyed; for who would save what He will not save? The enemies of our souls must be made to perish, like the Amalekites and Agag their king, without help or hope. They are of the earth, earthy: the flesh in which is their strength and dwelling-place shall return to the dust from which it was taken, and in that day shall all fleshly thoughts and earthly plans perish.

43. Thou shalt deliver me from the strivings of the people : and Thou shalt make me the head of the heathen.

44. A people whom I have not known : shall serve me.

45. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me : but the strange children shall dissemble with me.

46. The strange children shall fail : and be afraid out of their prisons.

They who are Christ's shall share in all He has and all He is. They are members of His Body; and as they struggle and suffer with Him, so also shall they reign with Him. In Him they are delivered from the unrest and unending strife which is their portion who have not His peace, and would not have Him to reign over them. In the power of His holiness, and endued with the riches of His grace, they partake His glory, Who is not only the Head of the Church which He has redeemed, but is also the King of the world.

They see how, in His good time, one people after another are gathered into His one fold; how the fulness of the nations is being brought to know Him and to serve Him, 'Whose service is perfect freedom.' They learn how 'faith cometh by hearing;' and how the very message that Christ was crucified, is in truth the proclamation of His Almighty sovereignty. It may be that some may make a show of reverence without keeping the law of obedience, but their work will come to nothing. Hypocrisy must wither; sin must be afraid; they who are not, and will not be, children of the kingdom, shall find that the stubbornness of heart which they had fancied their fortress and stronghold, is really a prison to which they have condemned themselves.

47. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong helper : and praised be the God of my salvation.

48. Even the God that seeth that I be avenged : and subdueth the people unto me.

49. It is He that delivereth me from my cruel enemies, and setteth me up above mine adversaries : Thou shalt rid me from the wicked man.

Thus then the Church on earth must join in praises with the Church in heaven, before Him Who hath life, and Who hath given to them that true knowledge of Himself which is eternal life. If they are weak, He is strong; if they are sinful,

He is a Saviour; He watches over His own with never-ceasing love; He will raise them from poverty, and deliver them from persecution; He will keep them safe from the evil world, and 'finally beat down Satan under their feet.'

50. For this cause will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles : and sing praises unto Thy Name.

And not the Body merely, 'which is the Church' of the believing, shall glorify God, but their Head shall join with them too; to the finiteness of their thanksgivings He adds the infiniteness of His own praise, Who became the manifesting of God's love to man, and the perfecting of man's coming near to God. In Him shall both Jew and Gentile glorify God for His mercy, and He shall glorify the Father for His mercy in them; 'as it is written, For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy Name.'

51. Great prosperity giveth He unto His King : and sheweth loving-kindness unto David His Anointed, and unto his seed for evermore.

The magnificence of David, and the glory of his kingdom, were but a shadow cast from that coming kingdom which the Son of David would establish for ever. The power of that Anointed King was to reach as widely as the mercy of God, and the law of His kingdom was to be unending righteousness. Then was the fulness of Almighty loving-

kindness shewn, when He came Whose name was called Jesus, of Whom the message was brought,—‘He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.’

This Psalm, which is found also, with some few variations, in 2 Samuel xxii., is said in its title to be by “David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.” It is an ascribing of praise to God, Who preserved him in very many dangers and trials, and had set him upon his throne, and had given him by Nathan a promise, that “He would raise up his seed after him, which should be of his sons, and would establish his kingdom; and that he should build Him a house, and that He would stablish his throne for ever,” (1 Chron. xvii. 11, 12). In the beginning of the Psalm David describes the mightiness of God under the figure of a fearful storm. It is possible that a storm, or some convulsion of nature, may at some time have deterred Saul from falling upon David and killing him; but if this did give occasion to this part of the Psalm, it also recalled to the singer’s mind all those instances in which God, through the powers of nature, had revealed His will to man,—when He divided the Red Sea and the Jordan, when He gave the law on Sinai, when He discomfited the Philistines at Mizpeh, (1 Sam. vii. 10). Two of the passages of this Psalm are applied by the writers of the New Testament to that promised Seed Who should reign over not only the Jew, but the Gentile, and of Whose kingdom there should be no end. The first verse is quoted in Heb. ii. 13, and the fiftieth in Rom. xv. 9; and there is also a reference to the fourth in Acts ii. 24. This is one of the most grand and regular of the Psalms, while at the same time it is difficult to trace out thoroughly the whole of the mystical meaning which was in the mind of the prophet-king.

Morning Prayer.

FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

PSALM XIX. *Cæli enarrant.*

1. THE heavens declare the glory of God :
and the firmament sheweth His handy-work.

The universe is a mighty temple filled with the glory of God, and each portion of it is ever shining with the reflection of that with which the whole is filled. The heavens, in their mid-day radiance dazzling mortal eyes with their sublime beauty and solemn purity, that high serene expanse of skies, which seems bent above the earth like a crystal vaulting, whose depths, infinite as they are, are full of light and clearness,—these speak not of themselves, but of One mightier, purer, brighter even than they are. The glory of the creation declares the glory of the Creator. That wonderful and lofty work is a world-wide confession, made not in word, but in deed, of that ‘God the Father Almighty, Who is Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.’

2. One day telleth another : and one night
certifieth another.

3. There is neither speech nor language :
but their voices are heard among them.

Heb. Day unto day pours forth speech :
And night unto night shews knowledge.
There is not speech, and there are not words .
Their voice is not heard.

Not for one short day, nor in one fixed place, is that mysterious display made of the mightiness of God. His glory has not been once proclaimed and then been hidden; but day following after day in unerring order brings ever the same message; and each night becomes the herald to the next of His creating power and His unvarying law. They are silent, and yet they speak unceasingly; from one region of the world unto another they are ever uttering their proclamation; and men's hearts, whatever the language of their tongues may be, can hear their voice, and men's eyes can read their tidings, which tell, and ever have told from the beginning, of Him Who made them:—for 'the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.'

4. Their sound is gone out into all lands :
and their words into the ends of the world.

Heb. Their line goeth through the earth ;
And their words to the bounds of the world.

But 'power and glory is not all that they have to tell of. The eternal Spirit, Who 'garnished the heavens' with their loveliness, impressed upon them yet a deeper meaning, which they only whose eyes He openeth can read. The will of God as revealed in His Gospel, the mysteries of grace made known in Christ, these marvels of His redeeming love were to be made no less fully known than the marvels of

His creating power. His apostles declaring His mercy were to be like the heavens declaring His glory. They were to measure out and divide the world, as fully as did the movements of the heavens and the courses of the stars. Wherever light shone, in every nation under heaven, there too was love to shine. The beams of rising day were not to go farther than the beams of grace and truth. So that of every land, even to the ends of the world, it should be said concerning those whom Christ had appointed as His messengers, — ‘Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.’

5. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun : which cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course.

6. It goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again : and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

The brightest of created lights is but a shadow of the presence of God. The sun, the most glorious to our eyes of all the glories of the heavens, coming, as he seems to do, from the east, glad and strong, and performing his allotted journey through the sky, until he returns to the quarter from whence he rose, and pouring down in his course his cheerful influence of light, and warmth, and life, upon the earth,—this daily and yet always joyful sight, will

come to us with tenfold joy, if it brings with it the thought of that Sun of Righteousness Who once tabernacled in human flesh, Who is the true Bridegroom of His spouse the Church, Who is the Lord mighty to save, the Light of Light, Who ‘for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,’ and was born in Bethlehem on the first Christmas-day. He Himself said of Himself,—‘I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father.’ His grace rests upon all of ‘His elect from the one end of heaven to the other;’ and from His love none are hidden. It shineth on the evil and the good.

7. The law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple.

We are told that the visible heavens declare the glory of God, we are not told that they declare His will. To admire God in His outward works is not enough ; we must obey Him in His law, we must be led by His Spirit. The heavens, indeed, are high and stainless, but it needs more than the contemplation of them to convert the soul ; this is the work of the Holy Ghost. Their motions are regular and sure, but the knowledge of them is not that true wisdom which makes wise even the ignorant and untaught ; this is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

8. The statutes of the Lord are right, and

rejoice the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light unto the eyes.

9. The fear of the Lord is clean, and endureth for ever : the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

The souls for which Christ died are of more worth than the material worlds which God has made ; and therefore the law and the commandments by which the soul is taught in righteousness, are higher and nobler, and outweigh in God's sight the laws which the heavens obey. His will is ever right, and therefore to follow it is ever the most true pleasure. His commandments are the very law and type of purity ; and therefore they who keep them best have the clearest insight into spiritual things. The fear of Him is holy and clean, and preserves them who feel it in holiness ; and therefore there is a blessing upon it for ever. His judgments are not as men's are—partial, but are true and perfect ; and therefore they will stand, because they cannot be other than they are. Thus has the law of God, through the power of the Holy Ghost, twelve glories, even as the tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits.

10. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb.

Not wealth, nor the gaining the dearest of this world's treasures,—not pleasure, nor the choicest of this world's joys, are to be chosen in comparison with the law and will of God. The gifts of grace

are the highest of all gifts. They only can save the soul; and ‘what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’ The least of the commandments of God, the smallest of the blessings of Christ, is more to be desired than all riches and all self-gratification; for the one last for a while, the other endure for ever.

11. Moreover, by them is Thy servant taught : and in keeping of them there is great reward.

For they teach what we could never learn of ourselves, what even the heavens and the firmament cannot teach us—the way to God. His works proclaim to us that He is a God mighty and wonderful; His revealed will alone teaches us how we may become His, and He Himself may be to us ‘our exceeding great reward.’ Nature teaches us awe and fear; grace teaches us obedience and love.

12. Who can tell how oft he offendeth : O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults.

13. Keep Thy servant also from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me : so shall I be undefiled, and innocent from the great offence.

As the feeling of our own littleness increases as we gaze upon the immensity of the heavens, so does the sense of our sins deepen as we look into the holiness of God’s law. While we compare our thoughts and lives with that all-pure rule of righteousness, our sins

which we had forgotten, our negligences and ignorances which we had never thought of, come before us in an ever-increasing number, till they seem more than the hairs of our heads, and we cannot reckon them. But that Holy Spirit which brings them before our memory can also cleanse us from them ; yea, the bringing them to light is His way to cleanse us from them. If we ask to be delivered from hidden and secret faults, in that very prayer there lies deliverance from sins of presumption. If we strive through grace to guard against the crafty approaches of evil, we shall be preserved pure from the tyranny of those terrible and most deadly sins that forerun that sin against the Holy Ghost, which never hath forgiveness.

14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart : be alway acceptable in Thy sight,

15. O Lord : my strength, and my Redeemer.

‘O God, make clean our hearts within us,’ is the Church’s daily cry: not merely the words of our lips must be holy and faithful, but the inner motions of the heart must go with them, like a strain of pure and chastened melody, if they are to come as an accepted sacrifice before the face of God. Yes, purity of heart is the end to which all things, seen and unseen, temporal and eternal, must bring the children of God. The eye of flesh can see the glory of the Creator proclaimed in the firma-

ment of heaven; and a glad and glorious sight it ever is! But there is a deeper blessing given to the pure in heart, even that they shall see God not in His works only, but in Himself; that they shall know Him and shall love Him, not only as the Almighty Maker of this glorious Universe, but in His higher glory still, as the Almighty Redeemer of man's offending soul.

This Psalm, which is appointed for Christmas-day, has much in common with the eighth Psalm, and was probably written by David at the same period of his life. The eighth Psalm, however, contemplates the glory of the skies as manifested in the night, when the sun is absent, while the present one rather dwells upon the beauty and clearness of day, and the power and brightness of that greater light which God appointed to rule the day. Hence it is fitly chosen for the Nativity of Him Who was 'a Light to lighten the nations.' The root of the Hebrew word in Gen. i. 16 which is rendered "to rule" the day and the night, has likewise the meaning of "to chant a mystical song for;" and from this double meaning of the word, the thoughts which the first verses of the Psalm contain perhaps first took their rise. But the heathens also used to speak of the harmonies of the heavens and the music of the spheres, which only the purified soul could hear. The opening of the Psalm appears to describe the glory of God in the material world, while in the latter half the prophet seems to be led on to His glory in the spiritual world as revealed by His Law: but the apostle St. Paul, by his applying the fourth verse of the Psalm to the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world by the apostles, (Rom. x. 18,) very plainly teaches us that the glory of God in creation cannot be disconnected from His glory in redemption; that the worlds of nature and of grace are not things to be divided and disunited, but that their laws and glories are woven into and connected the one with the other. From this the Christian Church may learn the lesson, that science, as it is called, and religion, are not to be separated; but that natural and revealed truth are to be taken as joined most closely by Him from Whom they both proceed. There is no salvation in the mere knowledge of God's laws in the universe of matter, unless they guide us on to the higher knowledge of those laws of the universe of spirits, whose eternal effect is purity of heart.

PSALM XX. *Exaudiat te Dominus.*

1. THE Lord hear thee in the day of trouble : the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee ;

2. Send thee help from the sanctuary : and strengthen thee out of Sion ;

We are all soldiers. Every baptized man is sworn to fight manfully under Christ's banner. Day by day he has to go out to battle with his enemies, who are the enemies of his Master too. This, then, is the prayer of the Church for each one of us, and her blessing for each one of us—that in the day of conflict and of trial, He may hear us and may help us, Who Himself went forth to combat with 'the strong man armed,' and overcame him. His name, by which we are known, will be a surer defence than any other arms. He watches us from His eternal throne, and succours us with His grace, if our foes—that is, our own sins—press too hard upon us ; and when our resolution wavers, and our hearts grow weary, and the time seems long, He cheers us again with a share of His own Almighty strength, by the Sacrament from His altar, and the means of grace that are within His Church.

3. Remember all thy offerings : and accept thy burnt-sacrifice ;

4. Grant thee thy heart's desire : and fulfil all thy mind.

It was an old custom that they who fought should

offer a sacrifice before they began the battle ; and we, if we would conquer, must do so too—must ‘offer ourselves, our souls and bodies,’ as a living sacrifice to Him Who offered Himself for us. So may we rely upon His grace with confidence. He will not forget our prayers ; He will not despise our penitence. Let the desire of our hearts be for ‘the things belonging to the Spirit,’ and He will not fail to grant it ; let our minds be set upon righteousness, and He will fulfil their longings.

5. We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and triumph in the Name of the Lord our God : the Lord perform all thy petitions.

The petition which the Church makes for the soldier of Christ at his baptism is, ‘that he may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh.’ But the fight is not over in a day. It is not by one blow that he can conquer. Only as time goes on, and he sees how his eternal Lord is ready to answer all his prayers, is he able to indulge in thoughts of hope. It is not till the fight is fought and won, that he can fully see how all his shoutings of triumph can have but his Lord’s salvation for their theme, and that His Name alone can be inscribed on his flag of victory.

6. Now know I, that the Lord helpeth His Anointed, and will hear him from His holy heaven : even with the wholesome strength of His right hand.

There was a time when Christ, the Captain of our salvation, fought and endured, not for His own sake, but for ours; and dark and fearful was the conflict He went through. Not till we ourselves have experienced what the power of the tempter is, and have resisted and overcome him, can we enter into the awfulness of the Saviour's struggle in Gethsemane, when 'being in an agony He prayed more earnestly,' and the angel 'appeared unto Him from heaven strengthening Him.' In Him Who conquered then, we conquer now; and He Who heard and helped His Anointed then, will hear and help us now.

7. Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses : but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God.

8. They are brought down, and fallen : but we are risen, and stand upright.

Some trust in themselves, in their own power, their own pride, their own passion, when they are called to contend with the enemy of souls. But these ever have failed, and ever will fail, when the hour of temptation comes. Sin is far stronger than man unaided by grace: he quickly falls before it; his pride is soon brought down, and he is tied and bound with its bitter chain. But faith hath surer wheels than pride; and prayer will carry us where power must fall. The memory of the Cross, and of Him Who died thereon, will put to flight the hosts of the evil one, and in the mightiness of our risen Lord we shall rise conquerors over both sin and death,

and shall see at last Satan trampled beneath the feet of God's elect.

9. Save, Lord, and hear us, O King of heaven : when we call upon Thee.

LXX. O Lord save the king :

And hear us when we call upon Thee.

Meanwhile we must pray without ceasing. We have a King eternal in the heavens, Whose power to save is greater even than our need of salvation, and Whose willingness to hear far outruns our wish to pray. Ask we of Him, and we shall always most surely have, both succour and safety and victory.

This too bears the title of a Psalm of David. It has been sometimes considered to be a prophetic anticipation of Sennacherib's invasion of Jerusalem, and of the prayer of Hezekiah and of his people for deliverance. It is more probably, in its literal sense, a devout and holy battle-song composed by David to be chanted by his armies when they marched with their king to war against their foes, especially, perhaps, against the Ammonites and Syrians, (2 Sam. chap. x.). It may well be considered to refer to the spiritual David, and to the soldiers of His army, who form the Church Militant on earth.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM xxi. *Domine, in virtute Tua.*

1. THE King shall rejoice in Thy strength, O Lord : exceeding glad shall he be of Thy salvation.

2. Thou hast given him his heart's desire : and hast not denied him the request of his lips.

If the men of Galilee, who stood upon the mount

from whence the Son of David ascended into heaven to sit down as an everlasting King on the right hand of God, rejoiced with 'great joy' when the work of their Lord was done, and He had entered into His glory,—if they felt thus, He too, Who was very Man, Who had felt all that man can feel of suffering, must have felt, too, all that man can feel of joy and exceeding gladness, in the hour when the power and the holiness of God was vindicated, and salvation was won for man. He had gained what He had sought. Eternal charity to man, whose brother He had made Himself, had been the principle and the law of His life on earth. His heart was only love —'love stronger than death ;' for that love had triumphed now over death and sin. In the days of His passion He had prayed, 'O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was,' and now His prayer was granted.

3. For 'Thou shalt prevent him with the blessings of goodness : and shalt set a crown of pure gold upon his head.

He Who was from the beginning the source of all blessings to man, is now blessed for evermore as man: and upon that Head which was once bruised and crowned with thorns, is set the crown of an unending kingdom, round which shine in infinite array those pearls of mighty price, even the souls of the redeemed, which He gave up all to win. Yea, He is crowned with a double crown,—the crown of grace

for the Son of God, and the crown of glory for the Son of Man !

4. He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a long life : even for ever and ever.

He had tasted death that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. And He rose again from the dead that we might rise and live with Him for ever and ever. The Father gave unto Him to have life in Himself, that we might have eternal life in Him.

5. His honour is great in Thy salvation : glory and great worship shalt Thou lay upon him.

6. For Thou shalt give him everlasting felicity : and make him glad with the joy of Thy countenance.

If, when the Son of Man was lifted up in agony upon the Cross, He could draw all men unto Himself, how much more shall He draw them now that He is exalted in glory upon His throne ! He is become the King of life and the Lord of grace ; and before His glory all earthly splendour fades, and before His power all human power dwindles. All that is holy and all that is bright, and all that is pure, is gathered round His Mediatorial throne, and He is holier, brighter, purer than all. 'The glory of the Father and of the Son is equal, and their majesty co-eternal.'

7. And why ? because the King putteth his

trust in the Lord : and in the mercy of the Most Highest he shall not miscarry.

He obeyed before He reigned. He entered not into His glory before He suffered. It is the renouncing of self, and the giving up of all, even the very life and soul, to God, that is the safe and appointed entrance into His mercy and rest. It was the Redeemer's dying prayer—'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit'—that unlocked the gates of Heaven to all believers.

8. All Thine enemies shall feel Thy hand : Thy right hand shall find out them that hate Thee.

9. Thou shalt make them like a fiery oven in time of Thy wrath : the Lord shall destroy them in His displeasure, and the fire shall consume them.

Beneath the footstool of His feet all flesh shall fall ; they who love Him kneeling there in adoring gratitude, and they who hate Him crouching down in terror and despair. They who knew Him not in His humility shall know Him in His power ; and His hand, which was pierced for them, shall find them out, how far off soever they may be. Those hearts which will not glow with holy gratitude shall burn with shame and infinite remorse when the manifestation of His justice draweth near ; and His awful sentence, 'Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire,' shall be but the echo of their own self-aborring consciences.

10. Their fruit shalt Thou root out of the earth : and their seed from among the children of men.

11. For they intended mischief against Thee : and imagined such a device as they are not able to perform.

12. Therefore shalt Thou put them to flight : and the strings of Thy bow shalt Thou make ready against the face of them.

Heb. Truly Thou shalt set them for a mark ;

Thou shalt fit upon Thy bow-string against their faces.

LXX. In that which Thou hast remaining shalt Thou prepare their face.

Into Christ's eternal kingdom sin cannot come, and no sinner can enter there. It is prepared for the redeemed alone. From that regenerated world each tree that bringeth forth evil fruit is rooted out, and cast into the fire. So it must be. Each one who commits a wilful sin takes his place among the enemies of Christ : ' He crucifies to himself the Son of God afresh, and puts Him to an open shame.' He would, if it were possible, bury Him again within the rock of his hardened heart, and seal the stone, that He might never rise. It is but a vain device. The King of all spirits, and the Searcher of all hearts, has risen and ascended into Heaven, and sat down upon His almighty throne ; and they who will be His people, and will obey Him, and will love Him, shall be His both in time and in eternity ; and they who refuse to love Him, and will not be His, by

that very act drive themselves away from Him ; by that very act pierce themselves through with many and immortal sorrows ; by that very act are ‘punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.’

13. Be Thou exalted, Lord, in Thine own strength : so will we sing, and praise Thy power.

The humiliation of the Son of God was the ground of His exaltation ; and His own strength was the strength of His infinite love. Through this He came down to earth and died ; through this He rose again and ascended into heaven ; for ‘He That descended is the same also That ascended.’ Thus His Church in this, and such-like hymns, shall ever magnify Him Who by the mightiness of meekness and the power of mercy conquered death and sin, and gained for Himself both in heaven and earth a kingdom which shall endure through all ages.

This Psalm of David has been considered to be prophetic of the **Messias** by the earlier Rabbis, as well as by St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, and the Fathers generally. It is true that it might be occasioned by some of the events in David’s reign ; and verses 3 and 9, compared with 2 Sam. xii. 30, 31, seem to refer to his victory over the Ammonites in particular. But a mere earthly triumph cannot be the chief subject of such high and glowing language ; and the fact that the King, who is bidden to rejoice in the strength of God in the first verse, is in the last addressed as Jehovah exalted in His own strength, is sufficient to point out Him Who was both God and Man, as the One Whom the inspired Psalmist was led to glorify. Its subject being the triumph of Christ, it is fitly chosen by the Church for Ascension-Day.

Ebening Prayer.

FOR GOOD-FRIDAY.

PSALM xxii. *Deus, Deus meus.*

1. My God, my God, look upon me ; why hast Thou forsaken me : and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint ?

We are brought into the very midst of the Passion ; we are standing on Calvary, with the Cross full before us ; it is the ninth hour, and ‘ Jesus cries with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ’ Surely these words should be written, not with ink, but with tears ! He Who was from eternity with the Father is left in the solitude of the sinner ; He Who is the fount of life is tasting of pain and death ; He Who is immortal love is bowed down with sorrow and dismay. The Son of God has entered into the deep loneliness and utter weakness of human nature, left to die. It was not possible for the cup to pass away, unless He drank it ; and even the abiding presence of the Father of all comfort is withdrawn from Him, while He drains it to its dregs of suffering.

2. O my God, I cry in the day-time, but Thou hearest not : and in the night-season also I take no rest.

3. And Thou continuest holy : O Thou worship of Israel.

He had taken both the nature of sinful man and the burden of his sins upon Himself; and under the sense of its overwhelming weight He could not but cry unto His Father on the Cross, as He had cried in the night before in His sleepless agony in the garden. As He saw then in its nearness the immensity of the work He had to do, and how foul and wretched sin was before the unchanging holiness of the all-righteous God, 'He began to be sorrowful and very heavy.' Three times, while others were weary and slept, He rested not, but prayed, 'If this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done;' three times He cried in the garden unto His Father and His God, that He might atone for that threefold temptation of curiosity, desire, and pride, by which man in the garden fell. He cried in the day-time, that by His Cross and passion,—and He rested not in the night-season, that by His agony and bloody sweat,—He might deliver us.

4. Our fathers hoped in Thee : they trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them.

5. They called upon Thee, and were holpen : they put their trust in Thee, and were not confounded.

It was not that God could not deliver those who trusted in Him : He had done it for a long time of old. He Who could deliver the sinful when they

came to Him with faith, could much more deliver the Sinless Who came to Him in innocence. Rather it was, that He was not delivered that we might find deliverance; He was not helped, that we might ask for help and have it; He was put to confusion, that we might never be confounded.

6. But as for me, I am a worm, and no man : a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people.

But the Holy One of God had taken to Himself the nature of him who was made from the dust of the earth. He was in all things as 'man, which is a worm;' yea, He had made Himself even less than man, for, though without man's sin, He bore man's punishment. His beauty was gone for sorrow; His face was marred with buffetings. He was 'set at nought and mocked,' and when He was offered to the world, 'Behold the man,' He was despised as a Saviour and rejected as a King. They for whom He died had made their choice,—'Not this man, but Barabbas;' and Barabbas was a robber.

7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn : they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying,

8. He trusted in God, that He would deliver him : let Him deliver him, if He will have him.

'They that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple,

and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God.' For comfort, all He had was insult. His face was worn with agony; and they who saw Him distorted theirs with scoffing. They laid to His reproach, not His unbelief, but His faith; they scornfully blasphemed and derided His patient trust in God. Yet He was silent: 'When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not.'

9. But Thou art He that took me out of my mother's womb: Thou wast my hope, when I hanged yet upon my mother's breasts.

10. I have been left unto Thee ever since I was born: Thou art my God even from my mother's womb.

'When He took upon Him to deliver man, He did not abhor the Virgin's womb.' He was not born as man is born, in sin and corruption; but 'He was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary.' The angels had rejoiced over His birth; the star of the Epiphany had shone over Him while yet lying upon the bosom of His ever-blessed mother. He had trusted in God. His Father had been with Him,

and He had been with His Father, all through His sojourning as Man in this sinful world. From before the beginning of the worlds He had been His Father ; from His mother's breasts He had been His God.

11. O go not from me, for trouble is hard at hand : and there is none to help me.

He was scourged, and there was none to help ; He was defiled with spitting, and there was none to help ; He was smitten with buffetings, and there was none to help ; He was crowned with thorns, and there was none to help ; He was nailed upon the tree, and there was none to help ; He cried, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me, and there was none to help. Yea, trouble is ever near when God is far off, and only departs when God draws nigh : He only can help. The blessed Virgin, the mother of the Lord, and Mary Magdalene, and St. John the beloved apostle, may indeed be near the Cross ; but they can but weep and suffer with Him ; they can but bear the piercings of their own souls with the sword of sorrow, and cannot lessen His.

12. Many oxen are come about me : fat bulls of Basan close me in on every side.

13. They gape upon me with their mouths : as it were a ramping and a roaring lion.

God seemed to have departed from Him ; seen and unseen enemies had come around His cross. All the malice both of earth and hell was gathered there. The multitude of the people crying, ' Crucify Him ;' the chief priests and Pharisees swollen with

pride and wanton with cruelty, who stirred them up to new scoffings and revilings; and the powers of darkness, who were triumphing in the scene where the Son of Man was being conquered by death, and was about to be a captive to the grave,—all were collected round the sharp and cruel bed of the dying Saviour of the world.

14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint : my heart also in the midst of my body is even like melting wax.

15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums : and Thou shalt bring me into the dust of death.

His sacred blood fell drop by drop upon the ground, from His pierced-through and stretched-out hands, ‘even as the drops that water the earth.’ His life ebbed gradually away, ‘as water spilt upon the ground.’ The agony of the cross wrenched His bones apart, and strained each nerve and fibre of His body in anguish. His heart, which had so long glowed with love and tenderness, fainted and dissolved in that fierce torture, as wax within a burning flame. His misery and fevered pain dried up His endurance and His strength, like a vessel of clay is dried and burnt within a furnace. The sorrow of His soul and the pangs of His body parched His tongue within His gums; and, ‘that the Scripture might be fulfilled, He said, I thirst,’ Who is the giver of living water. So, and by such terrible steps,

did He descend that road by which sinning man returns unto the dust.

16. For many dogs are come about me : and the council of the wicked layeth siege against me.

Both the heathens and the Jews had surrounded Him in their madness and fury, like dogs surround a hunted hind. The wicked-hearted had joined themselves together to hurry Him to condemnation and to death, as hunters encompass and drive on their prey. 'They had gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers,' to mock Him before they slew Him.

17. They pierced my hands and my feet ; I may tell all my bones : they stand staring and looking upon me.

'And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' They pierced His hands with nails, that our souls might not be pierced with judgments. They stripped His raiment from Him, that we might be covered with His righteousness. 'And sitting down they watched Him there : ' they gazed idly upon Him, not that they might believe and live, but that they might fulfil the Scripture which saith, 'They shall look on Him Whom they pierced.'

18. They part my garments among them : and cast lots upon my vesture.

‘Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part ; and also His coat : now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be ; that the Scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things, therefore, the soldiers did.’ And thus He Who had given up His cloak did not refuse to give His coat also.

19. But be not Thou far from me, O Lord : Thou art my succour, haste Thee to help me.

20. Deliver my soul from the sword : my darling from the power of the dog.

21. Save me from the lion’s mouth : Thou hast heard me also from among the horns of the unicorns.

Thus was waged that fearful and mysterious struggle between the power of death and the human soul of Christ, on which the redeeming of the world depended. He conquered death, yet not by shunning it, but by yielding to it. ‘Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,’ was the token that the last enemy was vanquished ; and then the Son of God bowed His head and gave up the ghost. His soul had prevailed over human

fear; it had determined as an unchanging fact that the Father of all souls was near; that He was, and always must be, an everlasting Succour and a sure Refuge; and that in His creating hands, and not in the destroying hands of death, abode all power and might. Thus, through most perfect faith, was the manhood of the Son of God delivered from the sharpness of death: His human soul, which was inseparably united with His Divinity, descended indeed into hell, but was not holden there. The dreadful abode of the evil one indeed opened its devouring mouth, but the soul of the Beloved of the Father had overcome its power. His prayer, uttered with a dying mouth, in the midst of mortal and immortal hatred and spite, was heard; He died, and man was saved.

22. I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren : in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.

‘It is finished.’ The Cross has done its work; but it is a work not of death, but of life, and life immortal. It abides for ever, an enduring monument of the love of God to man. He, Whose love was stronger than death, became in all things even as we are, and ‘by the grace of God He tasted death,’ not only as man, but ‘for every man.’ He purchased to Himself an universal Church with the costly shedding of His blood, with which, and in the midst of which, He should dwell for ever, in the union of holiness which none can break: ‘For both

He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one : for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee.'

23. O praise the Lord, ye that fear Him : magnify Him, all ye of the seed of Jacob, and fear Him all ye seed of Israel ;

24. For He hath not despised, nor abhorred, the low estate of the poor : He hath not hid His face from him, but when he called unto Him He heard him.

Surely this amazing shewing forth of the love of Christ should call forth the love of His Church in return. They whom He has redeemed, and has chosen as a spiritual Israel, must ever rejoice with trembling in Him Who despised not our nature for its misery, nor abhorred it for its sinfulness, but came into our fallen world and took it into Himself, that our hearts might be no longer turned from God, and that our prayers might be heard, and gain forgiveness.

25. My praise is of Thee in the great congregation : my vows will I perform in the sight of them that fear Him.

26. The poor shall eat and be satisfied : they that seek after the Lord shall praise Him ; your heart shall live for ever.

For this cause shall the whole Church throughout

the world ever praise God, and return Him thanks for His 'inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.' He Who is 'our Passover hath been sacrificed for us, therefore must we keep the feast.' Under His cross must we renew in faith and penitence the vows made for us as His children ; and then may all, even the weakest and poorest, who seek to be one with Him, and that He should be one with them, be strengthened and refreshed by the food of immortality. The fast of Good-Friday brings us to the feast of Easter-day ; and both are full of the same message of life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel.

27. All the ends of the world shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord : and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him.

28. For the kingdom is the Lord's : and He is the Governour among the people.

· He in that lifting up of Himself upon the cross shall draw all men unto Him. The patience of His death shall turn those to Him whom the innocence of His life had not turned : 'The weakness of God is stronger than man.' The reign of the King of the earth shall be proclaimed in every corner of the earth ; and they who hear the proclamation shall remember themselves, and own their true and rightful Ruler, the Lord and King, not only of their bodies, but of their consciences and souls.

29. All such as be fat upon earth : have eaten, and worshipped.

30. All they that go down into the dust shall kneel before Him : and no man hath quickened his own soul.

LXX. My soul shall live unto Him.

Of the heavenly banquet to which He shall call us all may eat, and worship, both the sorrowing sinner and the rejoicing saint ; they who are satisfied there shall yet be hungry, for He said, ‘ Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day.’ The hour is coming when every mortal man shall kneel before Him, both the living and the dead. He is ‘ the Resurrection and the Life,’ and none can rise again from the dust of death, except He, Who once descended thereto, raise him by His quickening Spirit.

31. My seed shall serve Him : they shall be counted unto the Lord for a generation.

32. They shall come, and the heavens shall declare His righteousness : unto a people that shall be born, whom the Lord hath made.

He Who saved not Himself shall save His people. They shall be His, and He shall be theirs ; they shall be ‘ a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they may shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.’

A people shall be born: 'but who is their father?' 'It is He that hath made them, and not they themselves.' Born again of water and of the Spirit, and being made the people of God, they shall be living witnesses of the love and righteousness of Christ, both to the Church visible on earth, and also in the Church of the saved in heaven, when 'by His Cross and Passion they shall have been brought unto the glory of His Resurrection.'

This Psalm is inscribed "to the chief Musician upon Aijelet Shabar." These words are rendered by the LXX. "for the morning help, or raising up," and by the Chaldee paraphrase "for the morning oblation." The true translation is, "for the hind of the morning." This title may be explained to be a poetical expression for the rising sun or the early twilight, or it may be considered as the name of a tone or chant to which this Psalm, and perhaps also the forty-second, was to be recited, as we now say that a hymn is to be sung to the tune of "Adeste Fideles;" or a song to that of "God save the Queen." In all these senses the words may mystically be referred to Christ, the Sacrifice for the world, (See Canticles ii. 9, viii. 14; Isa. lviii. 8; St. Mark xvi. 2). The whole Psalm, which is appointed by the Church for Good-Friday, is a revelation to David of the Gospel of the Passion: the Evangelists can hardly narrate the sufferings and death of the Lord with greater clearness and fulness. In order to lessen the evidence of this prophecy, the Jews have endeavoured, on the alteration of one letter in some of the copies, to translate verse 17, "like lions on my hands and my feet;" but the translation of the LXX., which is the same as that of our versions, shews that the ancient Hebrew copies read the verse as we do.

PSALM xxiii. *Dominus regit me.*

1. THE Lord is my shepherd : therefore can I lack nothing.

Christ our Lord hath told us that He is the Good Shepherd. He knows His own sheep and is known by them. The Church is His sheep-fold, and we

are His flock 'and the sheep of His pasture.' While we are away from Him, we are weak, and wandering, and lost; we lack everything. It is not till He becomes our Shepherd, and we know His voice, and follow Him, that we can feel that we want no other guide. Having His care, we need nothing; having His love, we have everything; for He knoweth of what each sheep of His flock hath need. He feedeth each; He carrieth the lambs in His arms and in His bosom; He gently leadeth those that are weary and heavy-laden; He seeketh after the lost until He find them; and then beareth them home rejoicing. Oh may we indeed be His, and He be ours, Who is the true Pastor and the Good Shepherd!

2. He shall feed me in a green pasture : and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.

The world is but a desert land, with bare and rugged hills, and dry and scorching valleys. It is from the world into the Church that Christ would lead His sheep. There He has for them the refreshing dew of holy baptism, and the sweet pastures of His holy Word. There there are green and quiet resting-places for them that are tired with their wanderings. There there are neither storms nor torrents, but still and tranquil streams, at whose living waters the parched soul may quench its thirst. There there is pardon and comfort for the past, and grace for the time to come; and there too

there is the foretaste of the ‘pure river of the water of life, which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.’

3. He shall convert my soul : and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for His Name’s sake.

His love shall bring back our souls when they stray from Him, and cheer them when they droop with heaviness. He will go before His own, and lead them in the way in which they should go ; and in the consolation of His abiding presence, the way of righteousness, narrow though it be, shall become a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. And this will He do, not for our merits, but His own mercy, not for our deservings, but for His own Name’s sake.

4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.

Yea, and though our road in this mortal life become dark and low ;—though trouble, and sorrow, and trial, aye, and even death itself, come around us and overshadow us, yet need we have no real fear. They to whom the substance brings no fear, need not be frightened by the shadow. He Who has led us into trial will lead us out of it again, and will deliver us from all evil. Gloomy though the view may be, and sad, yet if we can

but see Him, and know that He is with us, we have light enough. His loving rod is near to correct us when we stray, His shepherd's crook to raise us when we fall, and their touch assures us of the comfort of His help.

5. Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me : Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.

He hath long ago, on the night before He suffered, prepared a table for those that continue with Him. And there His own hands offer to us that Eucharistic food by which our souls are strengthened in all temptations and refreshed in all troubles. He pours down upon our heads the anointing of His eternal Spirit, the manifold richness of His gifts of grace. He freely bestows all, and our part is only to receive ; and yet all the blessings that He bestows here are but an earnest of that which He has in store, are but drop after drop from that cup of the fulness of joy which shall more than satisfy the longings of every soul in heaven.

6. But Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,’ is the voice of that Good Shepherd which His sheep shall learn to know. New tokens of His pity and His love shall shine upon us, before us, and behind

us, on our right hand and on our left, all our lives long in our journeying here; until we follow Him from this wilderness of things temporal, to that better country where the one fold shall be gathered under the one Shepherd in perfect and unending rest.

This Psalm was written by David, who had been himself a shepherd, and knew full well the nature of a shepherd's work, and the need the flock have of a shepherd's care. It seems more probable that it was written in his younger and more innocent days, when his chief enemies were the lion and the bear, and his greatest danger was, lest night should overtake his flock and him in some dark and precipitous ravine of the wilderness. It is not unlikely that this may have been one of the holy songs which he sang upon his harp before Saul, when the evil spirit troubled him, (1 Sam. xvi. 23). Its gentle, quiet, trustful tone, and the calm feeling of peace which pervades it, would make it peculiarly fit to soothe the self-tormenting king, and to clear away the gloom and unhappiness of his mind.

Morning Prayer.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM xxiv. *Domini est terra.*

1. THE earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is : the compass of the world, and they that dwell therein.

2. For He hath founded it upon the seas : and prepared it upon the floods.

This earth of ours is God's world. It is not for man to do as he will in, and to abuse; still less is it something for the prince of evil to claim as being at his own disposal. In the beginning

God created it by His Almighty word. He called each thing that is upon it into being ; and last of all He made man in His own image to replenish and subdue it. But He not only formed it once for all, and established its order and the laws of its nature ; but He still by His providence governs it, and ordains all that is in it. From that time when God said, 'Let the waters be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear,' He has watched over it with an unceasing sovereignty, all-just as it is all-wise, all-holy as it is all-mighty. He is the God and Father of all, not of one age only, or of one nation only.

3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord : or who shall rise up in His holy place ?

But who of the sons of men shall approach to this Almighty and all-righteous God ? Into His holy place only the holy can come. Moses indeed for a little while ascended into the hill of Sinai ; but His holy place is 'the Mount Sion, the city of the living God,' into which nothing unholy, impure, defiled, can enter. There His purity and truth, of which we see the dim reflection in this lower world, shine in their perfect brightness. One only shall thither ascend, Who can claim a right to enter there, even that second Man Who is the Lord from heaven.

4. Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart : and that hath not lift up

his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour.

5. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord : and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

He only was holy in deed, and will, and word; yet in Him we, who are His, are holy too. Our nature, yea, the nature of all who dwell in the world, was hallowed by the Son of God taking it upon Himself; and of His fulness have all we received. Our sinful hands are made clean by the sprinkling of His blood; our evil thoughts are purged by His indwelling Spirit. If we strive that our hearts may not be fixed on this life, which to most is but vanity of vanities; if in all things we speak that which is true before Him that is true; then in Him we are accepted, and our imperfect penitence is covered by His perfect innocence. So shall we in Him, not of ourselves, go on from grace to grace, and from righteousness to righteousness, until we arrive at the eternal Sion; so shall we attain the fulness of that blessing which He Himself proclaimed,—‘Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.’

6. This is the generation of them that seek Him : even of them that seek Thy face, O Jacob.

They who have been baptized with Him into His death, and are risen indeed with Him to newness of

life, shall ascend with Him into glory. These are they who seek God, even the members of His visible Church on earth. In this world we can only seek Him; but if we seek Him faithfully, in the world to come we shall most surely find Him Who is the true Jacob, the Inheritor of the rightful blessing, and be found in Him Israelites indeed, no longer tainted with worldliness or guile. These are they, who shall follow Him Who hath ascended into the highest heaven and entered within the veil of the holiest of holies.

7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors : and the King of Glory shall come in.

LXX. Lift up your gates, ye princes.

8. Who is the King of Glory : It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle.

What words can worthily describe the grandeur of that closing scene of man's redemption, when our human nature went up to God, and our flesh and blood for the first time inherited heaven? What human pomp, even of the ark of God entering into Sion, could be likened unto that? On the hill of Olivet He was parted from men, and ascended from their sight unto His own seat on God's right hand. Round Him were gathered, as witnesses of His triumph, angels and archangels in many a band; they who had announced His birth,

and ministered to Him in the desert, and strengthened Him in the garden, and rolled away the stone. And as they drew near to the gates of the unseen city, whose names are Faith and Hope, and approached its everlasting doors of mercy and of love, they bade them, in shouts of ringing joy, to lift themselves up and open wide, that the King of Glory might come in. Well might the immortal keepers of those gates not made with hands wonder at the sight, when one born of a woman, and clothed still with the raiment of the flesh, claimed an entrance into the very abode of God! And well might they, who had seen both the conflict and the victory, who had seen the sun darkened and the rocks rent, reply, — that He was a warrior, strong as God Himself; that He was One Who had been wounded, but Whose scars were healed; He was One Who had been dead, but was alive again; One Whose soul had been once exceeding sorrowful even unto death, but Who had conquered sorrow and sin, and the grave, and was entering into the joy which He had won.

9. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors : and the King of Glory shall come in.

10. Who is the King of Glory : even the Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory.

Yet bright and glad as was this triumph of the ascension of the Lord to heaven, there is yet reserved in the decrees of God a more glorious

triumph far. Then the Son of Man ascended alone ; but the hour is coming when in louder and more rapturous strains, the gates of heaven shall be bidden to enlarge themselves, and the portals of eternity to unfold, and Angels, and Principalities, and Powers shall stand in amaze to see the Lord of Life, no longer alone, but followed by the hosts of the redeemed, which none can number, enter there. Neither He nor they shall struggle more. The 'King of Saints' has conquered, and they in Him ; and therefore, they shall share in His kingdom, in His glory, in His eternity. Amen.

According to the Jewish tradition, this Psalm was written by David for Solomon, that it might be sung in alternate chorus by the Priests and Levites, when the ark was carried into the temple. It was certainly written for some occasion when the ark was brought to Jerusalem,—possibly, when it was brought from the house of Obed-edom, the account of which we find in 1 Chron. xiii. and xv. The LXX. prefix the title, "On the first day of the week," which may mean that it was used on that day ; but which is understood by Theodotion and other Fathers to have a reference to our Lord's Resurrection. It is plain that, though the occasion on which this Psalm was composed was the carrying the ark into Sion, yet its meaning cannot be limited to that ; but that it must be taken to celebrate a greater triumph, even the lifting up the ark of the second covenant, the human nature of the Son of God, to His throne in heaven. Verses 3—6 of this Psalm much resemble Psalm xv., which is also appointed for Ascension-day.

PSALM XXV. *Ad Te, Domine, levavi.*

1. UNTO Thee, O Lord, will I lift up my soul ; my God, I have put my trust in Thee : O let me not be confounded, neither let mine enemies triumph over me.

2. For all they that hope in Thee shall not be ashamed : but such as transgress without a cause shall be put to confusion.

Prayer is an ascent of the soul to its Maker. Each time that by prayer or meditation we draw near to God, we raise up our whole being. If then by prayer we come near to God, by faith we rest upon Him. To him who prays and believes all things are possible; he can never be put to confusion, who seeks humbly for the guidance of God's grace; and nothing can overcome his faith who has made His righteousness his stay. There can be no shame to them that would be His, and their hope shall never be disappointed; but all who trust in their own craftiness, and act with wilful dishonesty and perfidiousness, shall be disappointed of what they grasped at, and shall be covered with everlasting shame.

3. Shew me Thy ways, O Lord : and teach me Thy paths.

4. Lead me forth in Thy truth, and learn me : for Thou art the God of my salvation; in Thee hath been my hope all the day long.

This is the petition of the believing soul, that it may see the way of God's commandments, and may keep within it, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left; that it may be ever kept in that narrow path which leadeth upward unto eternal life. It is not in man to find this way

of life; and therefore God Himself hath become our Saviour; He hath come to us and met us, that He may Himself lead us and be our guide, that we may not only learn His truth revealed from heaven, but may also follow His unerring footsteps here on earth. In Him and in His guidance can be our only hope, through this weary day of our mortal life, in which we have but the feeble light of this world to walk by. In Him there is hope all the day long; in Him 'there is hope in the end.'

5. Call to remembrance, O Lord, Thy tender mercies : and Thy loving-kindnesses which have been ever of old.

6. O remember not the sins and offences of my youth : but according to Thy mercy think Thou upon me, O Lord, for Thy goodness.

But it is not enough to do well for the time to come, we must also implore pardon for the past. How many are the sins of our younger days, of our unsanctified wills and unchastened hearts! How many are there of them which we can ourselves remember; and alas! how many more which are now unknown to ourselves, and forgotten by all but God. The mercies and love of God are indeed infinite and everlasting; but it needs infinite mercy and everlasting love to pardon our uncounted sins. This must always be the petition of the repenting soul, when it casts itself upon God's pity and goodness—O Lord, remember not my sins, but remember me.

7. Gracious and righteous is the Lord : therefore will He teach sinners in the way.

8. Them that are meek shall He guide in judgment : and such as are gentle, them shall He learn His way.

9. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth : unto such as keep His covenant, and His testimonies.

He is gracious, and willing to receive all who come to Him, because He is righteous ; for His righteousness is not like the righteousness of man. Though we have sinned in time past, yet will He pardon us when we ask for pardon ; and teach us the way of truth, and shew us the path of life. Not the proud, but the meek, not the self-willed, but the humble and lowly, are they whom He will accept. ‘ Lord, I am not worthy,’ is the confession which best fits us to receive the spirit of His wisdom and of holy fear. They who thus wait for Him by ‘ patient continuance in well-doing,’ shall at length most surely know that His providences, however dark and trying they may for a time appear, are instinct with mercy, and full of grace and truth.

10. For Thy Name’s sake, O Lord : be merciful unto my sin, for it is great.

God is indeed both gracious and righteous. What must be the depth of our misery and height of His mercy, when our plea before Him is the magnitude of

our sin ! Yet, when we have faith in Him, we can plead even the greatness and the number of our sins in our cry for forgiveness. Yea, the greater our sins appear, and the more intolerable their burden is, the more ready is He to absolve us from them. When the servant owed his Lord ten thousand talents, and had nothing wherewith to pay, He forgave him all that debt, because he desired Him.

11. What man is he that feareth the Lord : him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.

12. His soul shall dwell at ease : and his seed shall inherit the land.

‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’ —not the fear of a slave, but the obedient reverence of a son. And obedience shall bring with it knowledge of what is true, and security and peace of mind, and blessings which shall endure for many generations. It ‘shall inherit the land for ever.’

13. The secret of the Lord is among them that fear Him : and He will shew them His covenant.

And holy obedience not only gains these blessings, which are its natural and proper fruits, but is also rewarded with a more hidden and precious token of the favour of Him Who revealeth Himself as the Unsearchable, and Who is known as passing knowledge. To them that overcome by obedience is given a pledge of assurance, that ‘white stone’ in which

is 'a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.'

14. Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord : for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.

If this be so, our eyes and hearts ought ever to be raised to God in fervent prayer that He would make us His, not only in name, but in deed ; that He would set free our affections by His Spirit, and disentangle them from those earthly and fleshly snares in which they have been so long imprisoned.

15. Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me : for I am desolate, and in misery.

16. The sorrows of my heart are enlarged : O bring Thou me out of my troubles.

17. Look upon my adversity and misery : and forgive me all my sin.

18. Consider mine enemies, how many they are : and they bear a tyrannous hate against me.

No sorrowing heart hath ever cried to Him in vain. The feeling of our own loneliness, and utter helpless wretchedness, is oftentimes a sign that He is near. As the grace of penitence is given to us in greater fulness, our sorrow and misery of soul becomes still more hard to bear. Our spirit is most deeply troubled, our anguish is the keenest, our self-reproach most bitter, even then, when He, from Whom we have turned, is about to turn to us. It

is then that the enemies of our salvation, the world, the flesh, and the devil, that accursed three, put forth all their hateful strength, and, like struggling tyrants, are most cruel when they are nearest to their fall.

19. O keep my soul, and deliver me : let me not be confounded, for I have put my trust in Thee.

20. Let perfectness and righteous dealing wait upon me : for my hope hath been in Thee.

LXX. The innocent and upright clave unto me.

But as the night is darkest before the dawn, so out of the desolation of penitence arises the holy confidence of faith. The hope that is founded upon the certainty of God's righteousness may be encompassed with floods and beaten with storms, but it will stand, for it is founded on a rock. There is ever a shelter within His Church, and our souls are safe in His hand. We know in Whom we have trusted, and may be persuaded that He is able and willing to keep that which we have committed to Him against the great Day.

21. Deliver Israel, O God : out of all his troubles.

They who have thus warred with their own doubts and sins, and by God's grace have conquered them, must ever feel that they have an interest in the conflicts of the Church militant on earth. They who have prayed for themselves will have been taught to

pray for others ; they will often and yet again commend their struggling brethren of the true Israel, to that Almighty Father and all-gracious God Who hath given to themselves deliverance from all their troubles.

There is no particular part of David's life to which we can with certainty ascribe this Psalm. It is in the Hebrew an alphabetic Psalm, that is, each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in succession. This plan was probably adopted to assist the memory of those who recited such Psalms, which are generally, as this is, of a serious and instructive character, and repeat often some one plain and elemental truth, "precept upon precept, line upon line."

PSALM xxvi. *Judica me, Domine.*

1. BE Thou my Judge, O Lord, for I have walked innocently : my trust hath been also in the Lord, therefore shall I not fall.

2. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me : try out my reins and my heart.

Happy indeed are they who have never defiled the purity of their baptismal robe by any foul and deadly sin, who have never wilfully fallen from grace ! They can appeal to their Lord, not only as their Saviour, but as their Judge, in all the chances of their mortal life. Surely there is no greater gift which the Holy Ghost can give out of His infinite store of gifts, than the grace of perseverance. They who trust in God shall have grace to stand ; they who trust in themselves have fallen already. It is only the Spirit of God which can make us God's, examining and chastening our affections, and searching and sanctifying our thoughts.

3. For Thy loving-kindness is ever before mine eyes : and I will walk in Thy truth.

They who have known and seen the love of God in Christ will need no other love. That will suffice them both in time and in eternity. They cannot but obey Him Who has so loved them. Righteousness of life must ever flow from holiness of heart ; and the Spirit of Truth will ever guide them who follow Him 'into all truth.'

4. I have not dwelt with vain persons : neither will I have fellowship with the deceitful.

5. I have hated the congregation of the wicked : and will not sit among the ungodly.

They who have grace to walk in God's truth are alike removed from folly and from falsehood. Their lot may be cast among the trifling and the vain, and they may be forced to converse with the untruthful and deceitful, but they will be among them, and yet not of them. They will shrink back both in sorrow and in fear from the profane and impious ; for there can be no bond of intercourse between them whose trust is in God, and them who despise and scorn Him and His laws.

6. I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord : and so will I go to Thine altar ;

7. That I may shew the voice of thanksgiving : and tell of all Thy wondrous works.

The nearer the child of God has attained to sinlessness and purity, with the higher joy does he come near to the presence of his Lord. Consolation and pardon is indeed promised to the repentant; but for the unfallen there is reserved the rapture of saintly fearlessness and of perfect love. They who have washed their hands in innocence, and have prayed that 'the thoughts of their hearts may be cleansed by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit,' can best lift up their hearts in that act of highest thanksgiving, when 'with angels, and arch-angels, and with all the company of heaven, they laud and magnify God's glorious Name,' and praise Him evermore. They best shall understand the wonders of that Mystery in which Christ's saints are made 'one with Him, and He with them.'

8. Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house : and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.

Yes, they who love God love His house ; they have pleasure in those earthly temples which are consecrated to His honour, and in which He manifests Himself to the believing spirit. But their love does not rest in the material house of God, but goes on rather to that temple into which all who trust in Him are 'builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit,' even Christ's holy Church, with which He has promised to abide until the end of the world.

9. O shut not up my soul with sinners :
nor my life with the blood-thirsty ;

10. In whose hands is wickedness : and
their right hand is full of gifts.

It is one of the sorest temptations to a soul that is striving to flee from sin, to be kept close in the company of sinners. To be among those who have no regard for right and for wrong, who are careless of others' sufferings, and tyrants over others' souls, who are not only themselves examples of fraud and dishonesty, but are ready both by evil counsel and bribery to destroy the conscientiousness of others,—this is a trial that is likely to eat away the piety even of the most earnest Christian, or, at least, to fill him with a most grievous fear lest he should become like those who surround him, and share their portion, should 'gain harm and loss' incalculable.

11. But as for me, I will walk innocently :
O deliver me, and be merciful unto me.

But even in this trial, a firm will not to do wrong, and an earnest prayer to be delivered from the temptation through the mercy of an all-merciful God, will be the Christian's safety and defence. He, Who alloweth us to be led into temptation, will always open a way of deliverance to them who wait and pray.

12. My foot standeth right : I will praise
the Lord in the congregations.

He whose affections are fixed on things eternal will stand unwavering, whatever happen. Where the

heart is fixed on heaven, the foot standeth firm on earth. The Lord of the Church will ever send to each tottering member special grace proportioned to his need; and to Him, they who have past unscathed through trials, and have stood amid temptations, must ever ascribe honour, and worship, and power, praising Him for His grace in His Church here, until they praise Him for His glory in the Church hereafter.

This Psalm was doubtless written by David in his youth, when he was exposed to temptation, and in much danger, but had not fallen into those grievous acts of sin which embittered his after life.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM xxvii. *Dominus illuminatio.*

1. THE Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom then shall I fear : the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid ?

The child of God need not fear, whatever dangers may seem to lie before him in the road of his pilgrimage. The Fount of all light has enlightened him, and he has seen his salvation; the Saviour of all souls has saved him, and his sin is pardoned. He may be weak, but his strength cannot be of himself, nor from himself, but from that Holy One Who is stronger than all, Whose name is the Almighty Comforter; He is the Lord and Giver of his spiritual life, and to the spirit of His holy fear all other fears give place.

2. When the wicked, even mine enemies, and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh : they stumbled and fell.

3. Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid : and though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him.

In the light of faith, in the hope of salvation, in the strength of love, the young soldier of Christ is called to that warfare of both watchfulness and boldness, to which his place beneath the banner of the Cross has pledged him. He is suffered to lack nothing that is needed for the waging of the war against the foes whose slavery he has renounced. The grace given in holy Baptism must receive its completion in holy Confirmation ; the gift of strength must be added to the gift of life. It is in youth that the carnal desires of the flesh come around us and upon us, like evil and devouring beasts ; and it is only by the graces of purity and chastity that they can be driven back and destroyed. Then the world, with its hosts of evil examples, and its crowds of temptations, strives hard to draw us under its power,—at one time by allurings and enticements, at another by the persecutions of open violence or sneering threats. It is only through the anointing of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost that we can hope to reign over our rebellious wills and unruly thoughts.

4. One thing have I desired of the Lord,

which I will require : even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple.

5. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His tabernacle : yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone.

6. And now shall He lift up mine head : above mine enemies round about me.

How many a heart in the freshness of God's grace has had this one longing!—has made this the burden of its prayer—that, having once seen the calm loveliness of the Church of God, having once felt the holy repose His house affords, and that in very truth it is good for it to be there, it might never again lose that sense of comfort and of peace, and never have to turn to the turmoil and trouble of the world again! So to have longed and to have prayed is in itself a most blessed thing, even though on earth our prayer be not wholly granted. In the season of our youth Christ draws us nearer to Himself, because Satan is drawing nearer to us. Holy Confirmation makes us rich with grace and strength, that we may contend against our enemies with a firmer spirit and a bolder faith. Glimpses of 'the King in His beauty' are there opened to us, that we may with the more perseverance struggle that we hereafter attain unto His perfect sight. They are given to us at God's will, not continually, but when

we need them. When unholy passions are troubling us, let us go to the Church for refuge; her prayers will soothe us, her songs of praise will cheer us, and we shall find a hiding-place from our temptations and from ourselves in the hallowing stillness of God's sanctuary. Amid the winds and storms which shake the trembling soul, we shall there learn to lean on that one Rock and most sure Foundation, which is Christ Himself. In Him, Who is our Head, even now and here shall we be raised above the strivings of the world and the fierceness of our enemies; and through Him shall we pass from the refreshment of the tabernacle pitched in the wilderness, even the Church on earth, to dwell unceasingly amid the immortal fairness of His house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

7. Therefore will I offer in His dwelling an oblation with great gladness : I will sing, and speak praises unto the Lord.

Unworthy as we are to offer unto the All-Maker any sacrifice, yet there are two offerings which He will not at any time refuse—the sacrifice of a broken spirit, and the oblation of a thankful heart. Let us offer within His Church and before His altar that which we have to give—ourselves; ever praising that ever-blessed Trinity Who is our Light, our Salvation, and our Strength, Who makes manifest to us in a threefold channel the unity of redeeming grace.

8. Hearken unto my voice, O Lord, when I

cry unto Thee : have mercy upon me, and hear me.

Yet to them whom God loves, and to whom He gives most largely of His assisting grace, there come times when the words of praise seem unsuited to them, and their spirits fall, and their exultation flags. They have to learn that humility and prayer must never be forgotten or laid aside ; that ‘Lord have mercy upon me,’ is equally as much needed by the young soldier of Christ fresh from the anointing of the Spirit of strength, and putting on his armour for the battle, as by the pilgrim, weary and way-worn, and struggling to his journey’s end. Spiritual joy wants humble prayer, no less than repenting sorrow.

9. My heart hath talked of Thee, Seek ye My face : Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

Heb. From Thee my heart saith, “Seek ye My face.”

Thy face, O Lord, I do seek.

10. O hide not Thou Thy face from me : nor cast Thy servant away in displeasure.

It is God Himself Who giveth us the love of Himself. From Him only comes the wish to go to Him. The voice of our hearts calleth unto the All-holy ; they ever say, like the Grecian strangers, ‘We would see Jesus ;’ and that very longing is the work of grace. All that ever is going on within us and around us, creation, nature, providence, calling, regeneration, grace, sanctification, all are ordained to lead us on to the one great end of our being—

the vision of God. That only is true life ; and the falling short of that is utter loss and death. Sin dims our sight of God : His displeasure at sin is nothing else than the hiding of His face. But He will never hide it from them who seek it.

11. Thou hast been my succour : leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

12. When my father and my mother forsake me : the Lord taketh me up.

There is one grace for which we need most especially to pray,—the grace of perseverance. ‘Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us,’ should be the desire and prayer of all whom He has received into His love, and confirmed with His strength. The best and purest of earthly affections fade : the love of parents, be it never so strong, is at last subdued by death, and their watchfulness and care is made to cease. But there is One Whose love never faileth, Whose care never ceaseth, Who has promised, and will perform His promise—‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ;’ Who, when we sink down into the grave, even from thence will take us up ; He is that immortal Bridegroom Who left His eternal Father and His Virgin mother to espouse a spotless Church, and in her each human soul, unto Himself.

13. Teach me Thy way, O Lord : and lead me in the right way, because of mine enemies.

14. Deliver me not over into the will of mine adversaries : for there are false witnesses risen up against me, and such as speak wrong.

He will not merely receive us to tarry in His tabernacle in this our mortal pilgrimage, but He will be our guide and defender in the way in which we journey. He will teach us His way ; for there are many ways of going wrong, and but one way of going right. That road through things temporal unto things eternal is beset with enemies : false witnesses of God, ‘speaking lies in hypocrisy,’ are ready to seduce us from the path of truth ; and there are other more open foes, incited by ‘the accuser of the brethren.’ But if the Holy Spirit lead us we shall not err, and if the Holy Spirit deliver us we shall indeed be safe.

15. I should utterly have fainted : but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

And one mighty grace of holy Baptism and holy Confirmation is that they are full of this assurance of hope ; they are effectual pledges that He Who hath begun His work in us will continue it unto the end. The runner in a race, when he is panting wearily, is cheered with the prospect of the prize. There is also a reward to him that runs the Christian course with perseverance. He ‘that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.’ There is await-

ing him the goodness of the Lord, sweet, incomparable, immortal, unchangeable, stored up for him not in this earth of the dying, but in that land of the living and of life, where all His saints live unto Him.

16. O tarry thou the Lord's leisure : be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart ; and put thou thy trust in the Lord.

Let us hear the voice of the Lord exhorting the soldier of the Cross—His voice, Who knows our longings, Who hath heard that one petition which we require, Who is keeping for us what He hath promised until our warfare is accomplished. He saith, Be patient, and be strong. He would not have us faint, for He is the God of comfort ; He would not have us fear, for He is the giver of strength. We must trust in Him, for He has promised, Who is Almighty, Who is sure, Who is true. If there be aught else more full of mightiness, of goodness, of comfort, let us wait for that ; but if not, let us wait on the Lord ; let us tarry His leisure, in Whose hands the times and the seasons are ; and by waiting on Him we shall at length possess Him on Whom we wait.

In the Hebrew the title of this Psalm is only "by David ;" but in the LXX. it is, "by David, before he was anointed." David was anointed three times : by Samuel, when he was young, (1 Sam. xvi. 13) ; at Hebron, when he began to reign over Judah, (2 Sam. ii. 4) ; and again at Hebron, when he reigned over all Israel, (2 Sam. v. 3). It applies, probably, to his second anointing. St. Augustine comments on this Psalm with reference especially to "that anointing which perfects Christians spiritually in the life which is promised them ;"

and applies its language to the young soldier of Christ, when about to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit in holy Confirmation. It appeared to tend to edification to fall in with this spiritual application ; and therefore St. Augustine has been followed in commenting on the whole Psalm, and on the last two verses almost his very words have been used. With regard to the words, "Seek ye My face," in verse 9, it may be useful to compare Deut. iv. 29, and Hosea v. 15. The first half of verse 15 is neither in the Hebrew nor in the LXX., but is added in our translation to complete the sense.

PSALM xxviii. *Ad Te, Domine.*

1. UNTO Thee will I cry, O Lord my Strength : think no scorn of me ; lest, if Thou make as though Thou hearest not, I become like them that go down into the pit.

2. Hear the voice of my humble petitions, when I cry unto Thee : when I hold up my hands towards the mercy-seat of Thy holy temple.

True prayer is never without an answer. Our Father Which is in heaven scorns no child who cries to Him for grace. He speaks to us, when we come to Him, by the motions of the Holy Ghost within us, by the inspiration of holy thoughts which arise within us, and reply to the cravings of our souls. To have no answer to our prayers is to be in the agonies of spiritual death. His not replying is a silent judgment that we are asking amiss ; for all true prayer comes not to God's ears alone ; it is, as it were, made one with the unceasing intercession of that great Priest Who all day long stretched out His hands, that we through Him

might at all times come unto the Father. Before Him, Whose human body is the true temple, and Whose human soul is the true mercy-seat, let us ever lift up not our hands only, but our hearts, and not our hearts only, but our lives, in a never-ending supplication of thought, and speech, and act.

3. O pluck me not away, neither destroy me with the ungodly and wicked doers : which speak friendly to their neighbours, but imagine mischief in their hearts.

4. Reward them according to their deeds : and according to the wickedness of their own inventions.

5. Recompense them after the work of their hands : pay them that they have deserved.

There is a holy indignation against them who are hypocritical and treacherous, that is a copy and shadow of the indignation of God. For them who are tempted and fall, we must pray, even as Christ prayed, that God will raise them up : but against hypocrisy, and against that which pretends to arise from right motives and kind feelings, while really it aims at wickedness, or covetousness, or malice, nature itself teaches us to utter a woe, which is an echo of that everlasting Woe which was uttered against lyings and hypocrisies before the foundations of the world were laid, and which was repeated by the lips of Love itself. Our own indignation at what is so vile and false must teach how infinitely and how perfectly the All-true God ab-

hors it. For such there can only be the reward of their deeds, the recompense of their work, the payment of the wages they have deserved ; for they themselves have settled that it must be so. What can mercy do for them who have disowned and scorned at truth? We have much need to pray that He, 'Who cannot lie,' will ever deliver us from that evil.

6. For they regard not in their mind the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands : therefore shall He break them down, and not build them up.

This utter depraving not only of divine grace, but of human instincts, with regard to truth and honesty in speech and deed, happens not to any man at once. It is the result of long and systematic carelessness, and of practical unbelief in the moral providence of the Almighty. By this hypocrites come to trust in their own hypocrisy, and not in God. They look to the works of their own hands, which are lyings, and not to the work of God's hands, which is truth. They learn to rely upon a falsehood, to build their hopes upon a thing which really is not ; and therefore they needs must fall,—and they do fall, miserably, deeply, and to where they cannot rise up again.

7. Praised be the Lord : for He hath heard the voice of my humble petitions.

The very sense of the miserableness of hypocrisy is given by the Holy Ghost as an answer to prayer. The knowing thoroughly and for a certainty that God will and must confound it, is a gift for which

we must petition Him, and for which we must praise Him when He has granted it to us. To have that knowledge is to have a share in life, and to be ignorant of that is to be near unto death.

8. The Lord is my strength, and my shield ; my heart hath trusted in Him, and I am helped : therefore my heart danceth for joy, and in my song will I praise Him.

9. The Lord is my strength : and He is the wholesome defence of His Anointed.

This is the unfailing result of rightful prayer,—‘My heart hath trusted in Him, and I am helped.’ It cannot be otherwise. If we rely faithfully on Him, Who is perfect strength, we shall be defended by Him Who is a sure protection ; and then our patience shall be changed into exultation, and the song of praise will be put into our mouths instead of the cry of prayer. He Who heard His Anointed One in the garden, and raised Him from the pit, will be ever with them who are in Him, and who are His.

10. O save Thy people, and give Thy blessing unto Thine inheritance : feed them, and set them up for ever.

In Him Who is the Head of the Church, is the Church saved ; in Him Whose inheritance we are, do we receive an immortal blessing. He, Who is our Shepherd, our Bishop, and our King, is set for ever at the right hand of God, and in Him are we—His flock, His Church, His people—exalted evermore to where He is.

This Psalm has been sometimes assigned to the time of Saul, but the third verse seems so clearly to refer to the plottings of Absalom and his counsellors for the throne, which ended in his rebellion, (2 Sam. xv. 1—12), that it may be well assigned to that time. The address of Absalom to those who came to Jerusalem for justice,—“Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice,”—while he was contriving his treason, is so plain an instance of one “speaking friendly to his neighbours, but imagining mischief in his heart;” that the Psalm may be well supposed to have been written by the Royal Prophet both to strengthen his own confidence, and to warn his people of God’s hatred of falsehood. The last verse contains a reference to Deut. ix. 29, which would remind the Israelites that God alone was their lawful King and only help.

PSALM xxix. *Afferte Domino.*

1. BRING unto the Lord, O ye mighty, bring young rams unto the Lord : ascribe unto the Lord worship and strength.

2. Give the Lord the honour due unto His Name : worship the Lord with holy worship.

Heb. Ascribe unto the Lord, ye sons of God,
Ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength.
Give unto the Lord the glory of His Name :
Adore the Lord in the vestments of holiness.

‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory,’ is the awful song of the seraphim in the eternal temple; and as the angels praise Him in heaven, so must the baptized members of His Church, ‘strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power,’ bring unto Him their continual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving on earth. The prayer of His saints, that His Name may be hallowed, offered before Him day by day, will be

more acceptable in His sight than the sacrifices of lambs which were offered every morning and evening continually under the elder covenant: and they only who have washed the garments of their priesthood white in the fountain of Calvary, can fitly confess before Him,—‘Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.’

3. It is the Lord, that commandeth the waters: it is the glorious God, that maketh the thunder.

4. It is the Lord, that ruleth the sea; the voice of the Lord is mighty in operation: the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.

He is the glorious God Who commandeth all the things of nature, and they obey Him. Each one of the elements does His bidding. He spake to the waters in the beginning, and they heard and were gathered together, and the dry land appeared. He said thenceforth to the sea, So far shalt thou come, and no farther. His voice, which is mightier than all deed, is the cause and origin of all that is, from the creation, when He spake and the universe obeyed, unto that final hour when the ‘seven thunders shall utter their voices,’ whose words are not to be written, but are sealed until the end. He Who is the ever-glorious and the all-powerful spake too with a yet more glorious voice over the waters of Jordan,—‘This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.’ His voice of grace, which is the Gospel,

‘comes not unto us in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.’

5. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedar-trees : yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Libanus.

6. He maketh them also to skip like a calf : Libanus also, and Sirion, like a young unicorn.

And not only the water, but the air, hears and obeys His command. The tempests execute His bidding ; they tear from their roots the mighty cedars which grow on Lebanon, and seem to make the very mountains themselves on which they grow, even Lebanon and Hermon, quiver like a startled animal. So by the power of that ‘rushing mighty wind’ which came at Pentecost, were the lofty and the proud humbled and brought down to the meekness of the Gospel, and the ancient empires were made to totter to their base, and to give way unto the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ.

7. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire ; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness : yea, the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Cades.

Heb. The voice of the Lord heweth asunder with flashes of fire.

The fire too hears His bidding and becomes His minister. Not the mountains only, but the plains, are compelled to confess His might. From one end of the land to the other, from the heights of Lebanon on the north to the southern desert of Zin, which is

Kadesh, all hear His voice, and quake at His lightnings and the fearful brightness of His presence, when He displays Himself as the Lord of nature. So too when the tongues of fire were divided among the apostles, and the fishermen of Galilee were made 'Sons of thunder,' 'the great and terrible wilderness' of this careless world was shaken with the voice which they had to utter, even the message of Christ crucified.

8. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to bring forth young, and discovereth the thick bushes : in His temple doth every man speak of His honour.

[The Hebrew may also be translated]

The voice of the Lord maketh the oaks to shake,
And strippeth bare the forests.

But in His dwelling-place doth everything therein proclaim
His glory.

And last, the solid earth itself is forced to tremble at His voice ; and every created thing, from the least to the greatest, is made to fear before Him. Timorousness shall be no better an escape than boldness shall be a defence. Even as an earthquake ploughs its furrows through the dark thickets of a forest, so will His almighty voice at last 'bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts ;' and then shall all in the new heavens and the new earth, both angels and men, rejoice in the salvation of the Son of God, and praise Him for the mightiness of His redeeming love.

9. The Lord sitteth above the water-flood : and the Lord remaineth a King for ever.

That one Eternal and Almighty Spirit Whose throne in heaven is above 'the sea of glass like unto crystal,' Who in the beginning moved upon the face of the waters of the unformed world, Who ceased to strive with man when the flood was sent to take away the world of sinners, Who descended in bodily form upon the Saviour when He was baptized in Jordan, and Who ever abideth upon the sacramental waters of Baptism,—He ceaseth not to govern and to teach the Church, until the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,—He with the Father and the Son liveth and reigneth, ever One God, world without end.

10. The Lord shall give strength unto His people : the Lord shall give His people the blessing of peace.

That He possesses strength, heaven and earth and all created things that hear His voice confess ; He is able, therefore, to give it to His people ; His power is an argument for His grace ; 'for as His majesty is, so is His mercy.' But, as in the revelation to Elijah in Horeb, it is not in the torrent,—not in the 'great and strong wind that rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks,'—not in the fire, nor in the earthquake, that comes the ineffable mightiness of the Almighty, but in His still small voice of blessing and of peace. No voice of God in thunder

uttered never so terribly can be mighty in operation like the voice of Him Who said, 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.'

This Psalm was probably occasioned by some memorable convulsion of nature which dwelt long in the minds of the people, and by which David sought to lead them to worship God in His mercy and loving-kindness, as being still more marvellous than His power and strength. The storm may also have been described with a mystical allusion to the conflict between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world; and the repeating of the words "the voice of Jehovah," in the meaning of thunder, seven times in this Psalm, has suggested to many the passage in Rev. x. 3, 4. With respect to the places mentioned in this Psalm:—Sirion, we learn from Deut. iii. 9, was the name by which the Sidonians called Mount Hermon, one of the many peaks of which was also called Sion, (Psalm cxxxiii. 3,) and the wilderness of Kadesh, which was also called Zin, (Numb. xxxiii. 36,) was a part of the Arabian desert which bounded Judæa on the south, as Lebanon did on the north. "The blessing of peace" seems to be that solemn threefold blessing which was given by the high-priest, (Numb. vi. 23—27,) who, when he pronounced it, we are told by Bechai, one of the Rabbis, so arranged his fingers, while he extended his hands towards the people, as to indicate a Trinity.—The LXX. adds to the title of this Psalm, "of the going out of the tabernacle," but it is difficult to fix upon any event recorded in Scripture to which allusion can be supposed to be made.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM XXX. *Exaltabo Te, Domine.*

1. I WILL magnify Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast set me up : and not made my foes to triumph over me.

As David, when all his enemies were conquered, and he was delivered from the rebellion of Absalom,

and pardoned for his sin in numbering the people, rejoiced to prepare the gold and silver for the building the House of God; so with a far more triumphant joy shall the Son of David, Whose kingdom is eternal, rejoice when the number of His elect is accomplished, and the Church of the redeemed no longer in warfare on earth, but, spotless and perfected with immortal brightness, joins her triumphant praises with His, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, before the Majesty of the Almighty Father.

2. O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee : and Thou hast healed me.

3. Thou, Lord, hast brought my soul out of hell : 'Thou hast kept my life from them that go down to the pit.

Then at last shall His Church discern the mightiness of the glory of His passion; then shall she see how the love of her Lord and Spouse was made perfect through suffering. Then shall the saints learn how He has ever pleaded before His Father the sacrifice of Himself,—how all their prayers have ever been one with His cry upon the Cross, and therefore they were heard,—how all sorrows have ever been one with His bleeding wounds, and therefore they have been healed,—how all death with them that are His has been one with His death, and all therefore was but an entrance into life,—how all sinlessness and all salvation has ever come of the grace which He earned for man.

4. Sing praises unto the Lord, O ye saints of His : and give thanks unto Him for a remembrance of His holiness.

5. For His wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, and in His pleasure is life : heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

LXX. For there is vehemence in His wrath ; and life in His will.

Then surely the recollection and the full understanding of the love of their Lord on earth will give power and joy to their chants of praise in heaven ; and the remembrance of His holiness and patient charity will inspire His elect with thanksgivings for which ages will be all too short ! True it was that He was wroth with sin, and that He accomplished in them that sentence which He had pronounced,—‘The soul that sinneth it shall die ;’ but in His wrath He quickly remembered mercy ; and His love fulfilled His eternal pleasure, that life should conquer death. He Himself yielded Himself unto death, and the sun set upon His body lying in the grave, while all His chosen ones sorrowed and were heavy-hearted at His loss ; yet it was but ‘a little while’ before He became the first-fruits of the resurrection in the brightness of Easter morning ; and they saw Him again, and their hearts were filled with joy which no man could take from them. So, too, the night of death has fallen upon the servants as it fell upon the Lord ; but on them, as

on Him, rises the morning of the resurrection, the breaking of that Day whose joy shall never set.

6. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be removed : Thou, Lord, of Thy goodness hast made my hill so strong.

7. Thou didst turn Thy face from me : and I was troubled.

Then shall the Church understand how her prosperity was always her trial. She will plainly see that confidence in her privileges, in her creeds, in her mysteries and sacraments, was a snare, when she did not duly use and humbly minister them ; that it was not her own rock that was so strong, but Christ only, on Whom she was built ; that when she looked to herself, and forgot her Lord, His face was turned from her, and she was troubled with strifes and divisions, and separations, which are the fruits of carnal self-assertion, and arise in the want of one-mindedness and of spiritual meekness.

8. Then cried I unto Thee, O Lord : and gat me to my Lord right humbly.

She will then see that prayer and humility have ever been the only remedy for the troublings of divisions and the want of unity ; that by them only can the breaches of pride and strife be built up ; that when Christ seemed divided, and one portion of the Church strove against another portion, the going in utter meekness and charity to Him, Who ever was the Head and Lord of all the members,

only joined that which was divided, and fulfilled His prayer, that His Church might be one, even as God was One.

9. What profit is there in my blood : when I go down to the pit ?

10. Shall the dust give thanks unto Thee : or shall it declare Thy truth ?

11. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me : Lord, be Thou my helper.

In prayer and humility only can the Church beseech to be delivered from spiritual death and ruin, and from that lost and fallen state in which her office of declaring God's truth should be taken away from her. In prayer and humility only can she be saved by that all-prevailing sacrifice which profits for the sins of all,—can she plead before the throne that He died to save us, and that if we be not saved He died in vain,—that He went down to the pit that we might rise to life, and that if our dust rises not His truth will never be declared. So has the Church been taught that in herself she is most deceivable and weak, but that in the mercy and in the help of her Lord she is most truthful and strong; that prayer ever was her mightiest arm, and Christ her only helper.

12. Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy : Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.

13. Therefore shall every good man sing

of Thy praise without ceasing : O my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever.

LXX. Therefore my glory shall sing unto Thee, and I shall have no compunction.

O Lord my God for ever will I confess to Thee.

In that dedication-day of the heavenly temple, when the morning of heavenly joy has followed the night of earthly heaviness ; when the saints in Christ shall have put off the sackcloth of mortality, and shall be clad with immortality and girded with incorruption ; then shall all that now is dark be clear, and all that now is wrong be righted. Then shall the Church, which now has to confess her sins only, have to confess her gladness. Where humiliation once sighed, there shall glory sing. There will be no interruption either of sin or of time to her songs of immortal praise. The saints made perfect shall render thanks throughout eternity to God for Christ their Saviour, and He too in turn shall, as of old on earth, thank His Father for those whom He hath given Him, of whom He ‘has lost not one.’

The title of this Psalm is, “ A Psalm of a Song, at the dedication of the House, by David.” The first part of this title shews that it was a poem which was to be sung to music ; but the dedication of the House is more difficult to explain. It may refer to the dedication of David’s own palace, the building of which is mentioned in 1 Chron. xiv. 1 ; but it seems most likely that the dedication of the piece of ground on which the temple was afterwards to be built by Solomon, (1 Chron. xxii. 1,) is the event referred to. In this view, verse 6 would refer to his sin in numbering the people, (1 Chron. xxi. 1,) 8 to his prayer, (xxi. 17,) 5 to God’s anger and mercy, (xxi. 15,) and 12 to his peace-offering, (28). It cannot, however, be certainly shewn

that this is the dedication which the Psalm was written to celebrate. The Fathers consider the Psalm to have a twofold meaning,—both literal and spiritual,—and St. Augustine declares it to be “a Psalm concerning the joy of the resurrection, and the renewing of the body to an immortal state, not only of the Lord, but of the whole Church.”

PSALM xxxi. *In Te, Domine, speravi.*

1. IN Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust : let me never be put to confusion, deliver me in Thy righteousness.

It is hard for one who has sinned to trust in God, for every act of sin destroys trust ; yet unless we are to become utterly ruined, and to be covered with shame, we must trust in God. Yes, we must have full trust in Him and in His righteousness, if we would be delivered from our own selfishness and sinfulness,—not merely in that first righteousness of God which condemns the sinner, but in that second and higher righteousness of His which delivers the sinner from his sin.

2. Bow down Thine ear to me : make haste to deliver me.

3. And be Thou my strong rock, and house of defence : that Thou mayest save me.

4. For Thou art my strong rock, and my castle : be Thou also my guide, and lead me for Thy Name's sake.

When we see what sin has made us, and pray to be delivered from its power and guilt, the time seems long until we are heard. The way seemed long to

him who was fleeing with the avenger of blood behind him, until he came to the city of refuge, and got himself within its battlements, and was safe. With the same eagerness and haste must we turn to that God Whose righteousness and mercy are like the defence of a castle on a mighty rock. 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.' Nor is it enough to turn to Him, we must also turn after Him. Our cry must be not only for deliverance, but for guidance too.

5. Draw me out of the net, that they have laid privily for me : for Thou art my strength.

The lusts and sins with which our souls are ensnared seem to us in their beginnings to be but small things, and slight as a spider's web, but in their end they are found to be as strong as cart-ropes, and they bind us in a most grievous and heavy coil, which no power of ours can burst through or unloose. He only, Who became weak that we might be strong, can draw us from that evil net which the enemy has made ready that we might be caught therein.

6. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit : for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth.

How freely and fully should the redeemed give up their life and soul into the hands of the God of truth, when the Redeemer Himself did no otherwise upon

the cross of pain! 'When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus He gave up the ghost.' Truly these words, which were the dying words of the Lord of life, will well become our mouths—as they did that of His martyr Stephen—not only when we come to die, but through all our lives, and ways, and doings. To know that we are not our own, but our Father's, Who has purchased us, is the highest and truest knowledge.

7. I have hated them that hold of superstitious vanities : and my trust hath been in the Lord.

LXX. Thou hast hated them that regard vanities to no end :
But I have trusted in the Lord.

8. I will be glad, and rejoice in Thy mercy : for Thou hast considered my trouble, and hast known my soul in adversities.

9. Thou hast not shut me up in the hand of the enemy : but hast set my feet in a large room.

He who knows God to be a God of truth will despise all vanities and deceits which call away the true affections of his heart from his eternal Father. To turn to any help but God is a sure sign of want of faith : so Saul in his trouble turned to the witch of Endor, when through his stubbornness and sin he had ceased to trust in God. If our Father is caring for us in our trouble, if in our adversity He still watches over us, that we blot not out our name from

the book of life, then may we even in trouble rejoice, and exult in Him Who in judgment ever remembers mercy, and Who ‘punishes us less than our iniquities deserve.’ He keeps ever what we have committed to Him ; and they who in death or in life have commended their soul into His hands, shall both in death and in life be kept safe from the hand of the enemy of souls. He will lead us into that way of His commandments wherein our hearts shall run with speed to Him, which is narrow to them that toil therein, but broad to them that love it.

10. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble : and mine eye is consumed for very heaviness ; yea, my soul and my body.

11. For my life is waxen old with heaviness : and my years with mourning.

12. My strength faileth me, because of mine iniquity : and my bones are consumed.

Again and again we must cry for mercy, for again and again we need it. Faithlessness and sin, like some fearful disease, gain a firm grasp upon us, unless we are ever going to the Divine Physician. Our natural wisdom and strength is found utterly wanting to discern that peace for which our eyes long. Our soul and body alike groan under the burden of unpardoned guilt. Without faith in God and without the love of Christ, our years would only be numbered by our troubles, and our life would be but one long groan. Our strength would be destroyed by

our evil doings, and we should be worn away with vain strivings and vainer regrets.

13. I became a reproof among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours : and they of mine acquaintance were afraid of me ; and they that did see me without conveyed themselves from me.

But that which man in his sinfulness deserved, the Son of Man endured undeservingly. He Who did no sin was accused as a sinner, that we, when we are accused as sinners, might be counted sinless. When He was sent to Herod, 'the Chief Priests and Scribes stood and vehemently accused Him,' and when He returned before Pilate, His own people, the seed of Abraham, 'were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed ;' while the Apostle who had declared that he would never be offended in Him, denied even with an oath that he knew Him, and all the other disciples, whom for so long time He had known and loved, 'forsook Him and fled.'

14. I am clean forgotten, as a dead man out of mind : I am become like a broken vessel.

15. For I have heard the blasphemy of the multitude : and fear is on every side, while they conspire together against me, and take their counsel to take away my life.

What trouble and dismay that we have suffered for our wrong-doings could be like His Who was left

to die for us? And yet how often do we forget the Lord Who died, and let the sorrows and pains which He bore for us in His human nature, which He took for us, pass from our minds as though they concerned us not! He was made a vessel of dishonour, cast aside and broken, that we might become vessels of honour meet for the Master's use. The reproaches that were our due fell upon Him, while the multitude blasphemed Him and reviled Him. He came forth crowned with thorns, and in the purple robe of mockery, and the cry that hailed the Lord of life was, 'He ought to die.'

16. But my hope hath been in Thee, O Lord : I have said, Thou art my God.

17. My time is in Thy hand ; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies : and from them that persecute me.

18. Shew Thy servant the light of Thy countenance : and save me for Thy mercy's sake.

But Christ the Son of God in His suffering and pain must be ever before us in our suffering and pain. If we teach ourselves to bear with Him, we shall be able to bear through Him. He is our immortal hope, for He has known man's trials ; and He is the end of our most living faith, for He is our unchanging God. We must make confession not merely with the mouth, saying 'I believe;' but with the whole will and being, giving up our nothingness into the hands of His almightiness, and so resting secure and safe

that no evil hands can 'pluck out of His hand' them whom He has accepted for His own. Thus will hope and faith make way for love; and grace will open to us that deepest of all blessings, the sight of the Saviour's face, so crowned with mercy that its brightness hides the thorns.

19. Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon Thee : let the ungodly be put to confusion, and be put to silence in the grave.

20. Let the lying lips be put to silence : which cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully, speak against the righteous.

They who call upon God shall live in the strength of Him on Whom they call; but they who will not call upon Him are hurrying fast to that utter darkness and deep dead silence in which none can call upon Him, even though they would. The doom of them who have 'said unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways,' shall be that their request shall not be denied to them. Where now are Pilate, and Herod, and the Pharisees, who slew 'Jesus Christ the righteous?' They are gone, and their lips are silent. Yet all the cruelty of Pilate, the disdainfulness of Herod, and the despitefulness of the Pharisees, fall short of theirs, who, being named by the name of Christ, and called to His righteousness, live evil lives, in opposition to His word and will. The lowest deep of sin is to hold the truth in unrighteousness.

21. O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee : and that Thou hast prepared for them that put their trust in Thee, even before the sons of men !

22. Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men : Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues.

But what a mighty and abounding store of goodness and of love has the all-loving Lord laid up for His servants and His sons ! He has from eternity been making ready for them that infinite reward, which is measured, not by their service, but by His own bounty ; and which He, Who can do what He will with His own, will bestow upon them freely, richly, openly. Here too, on earth, they shall have a foretaste of His goodness ; for He will be with and in them, though the world will not know it, and the strifes of men and the turmoil of the world will pass by them unheeded and unheard. What will be the contradictings of opinions and the noise of controversies to them whose ‘lives are hid with Christ in God ?’ They shall dwell in the Church on earth, in peace and trust, ‘with one mind and with one mouth glorifying God ;’ until they enter into the perfect enjoyment of His surpassing goodness, when we change the tabernacle on earth for the eternal home.

23. Thanks be to the Lord : for He hath

shewed me marvellous great kindness in a strong city.

24. And when I made haste, I said : I am cast out of the sight of Thine eyes.

25. Nevertheless, Thou heardest the voice of my prayer : when I cried unto Thee.

David had learned, and we too must learn, where our most sure defence lies: his 'house of defence' was not in Hebron nor in Jerusalem, but only in God Himself. He bowed down His ear unto his prayer, and not only saved him, but made him marvel at His love. In his haste and fear, when his trial came, he had thought that he was cast off by God and driven away from His presence. He had hurried, and he deemed that his God lingered. He prayed earnestly and humbly, and the hour of doubt went by, and he knew that his Father Which is in heaven was near to him as ever, and merciful to him as ever.

26. O love the Lord all ye His saints : for the Lord preserveth them that are faithful, and plenteously rewardeth the proud doer.

27. Be strong, and He shall establish your heart : all ye that put your trust in the Lord.

This is the reason why we should love God—that He is righteous. He preserves them who trust in Him: He is faithful to them who confide in Him: He pays back their arrogance to the arrogant. We

may most fully and thoroughly be sure that God will have right and will not have wrong, and in that confidence we may be both strong and bold. Yes, let His saints be strong—strong in truthfulness, strong in righteousness, strong in love, and they shall evermore be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

The LXX. gives the title of this Psalm, “The Ecstasy of David,” but this is not in the Hebrew, and is merely a reference to verse 24, where the words “my hastening,” might be rendered “my departure or ecstasy,” but more properly “my flight.” It was, perhaps, written by David on his looking back and recalling all the troubles of Absalom’s rebellion, and weighing the difficulties that still remained to be overcome. Verse 24 would then refer to his despondency on quitting the “strong city” of Jerusalem and the house of God in it. The first part of verse 6 was uttered by our Lord upon the cross as His dying prayer, (St. Luke xxiii. 46.) but yet the Fathers generally do not take the whole Psalm to be prophetic of Christ. In reading this Psalm, and others of a similar character, in which prayer, and prophecy, and rebuke, and thanksgiving, follow closely upon one another, and are sometimes intermingled, we must bear in mind the directions of St. Augustine, which apply to all the Psalms :—“If the Psalm pray, do ye pray ; and if it lament, do ye lament ; and if it joy, do ye rejoice ; and if it hope, do ye hope ; and if it fear, do ye fear ; for what is here written is a mirror for us.”

Ebening Prayer.

FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY, THE SECOND PENITENTIAL PSALM.

PSALM xxxii. *Beati, quorum.*

1. BLESSED is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven : and whose sin is covered.

2. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin : and in whose spirit there is no guile.

What can be a dearer blessing to the weary than rest, what to the dying than life, what to the sinner than pardon? When we have once seen what unrighteousness is and what sin is, there can be no rest, no comfort, till that intolerable burden is taken from the soul, and the conscience is made whole again. How must there have sprung up a rapture of unutterable comfort in the weeping sinner's heart, when the Lord said to her, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee: go in peace!' There is only one higher blessing in the storehouse of God's gifts than the gift of forgiveness, and that is the blessing of innocence. Blessed indeed is he who has never wilfully departed from grace, and who, like Nathanael, is free from guile!—not only from the guile which deceives others, but from the more subtle guile which deceives the sinner's own heart and conscience.

3. For while I held my tongue : my bones consumed away through my daily complaining.

4. For Thy hand is heavy upon me day and night : and my moisture is like the drought in summer.

Heb. My heart was changed as through the heat of summer.

LXX. I have been turned to wretchedness,
Whilst a thorn was fixed within me.

To hide a disease is not to heal it. To hide our sin from others, from ourselves, from God, will never take its guiltiness away. It is there always, eating into the soul and polluting the conscience, destroy-

ing the moral strength, and giving rise to continual restlessness and daily anxiety and distress. Sorrow must be the fruit of sin ; and secret sorrow must be the fruit of hidden sin. And this is God's work ; it is the effect of His righteous providence, which determines that sin shall not be happy. Guilt dries up the sources of grace and peace within the heart, as the parching drought of summer dries up the moisture from the fields. Guilt makes our whole moral being wretched, as a thorn fixed within the flesh spreads pain and festerings around it.

5. I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee : and mine unrighteousness have I not hid.

6. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord : and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.

Their sins only shall be covered who have not covered them. It is the acknowledging our wrong to be wrong, not only with the mouth before men, but with the whole spirit before God, that brings us to forgiveness. An obstinate persistence, when we have sinned, that we are not sinners ; an obstinate distrust of God's willingness to pardon if we will repent and amend, these are the walls which separate sinning and unbelieving man from his holy and faithful God. Man, who built them up, could never break them down ; therefore God in Christ has done this for him, and reconciled the world unto Himself. ' If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us : but if we con-

fess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Yea, in all our distress and sinfulness let us open our wounds, and Christ will heal them ; let us own our poverty, and He will make us rich ; let us confess our sins, and He will forgive their wickedness !

7. For this shall every one that is godly make his prayer unto Thee, in a time when Thou mayest be found : but in the great water-floods they shall not come nigh Him.

Heb. Truly when great water-floods come,
They shall not reach unto Him.

LXX. But in the deluge of many waters,
They shall not draw nigh to Him.

Because ' He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' should they that hope in Him confess their sins before Him ' Who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin.' Our duty is to confess ; His attribute is to forgive. If we delay, we both increase our own guilt and our own punishment, and despise His ever-present mercy. We must come to Him when He may be found. We are sure to find Him to-day ; to-morrow He may not be to be found by us. ' Behold now is the accepted time ; behold now is the day of salvation.' But when trial and punishment, and misery come, like the rushing of waters from the opened windows of the heavens and the broken up deeps of the abyss upon the sinners before the flood, then they who have sought to God ' when He might be found,' find in Him, like righteous Noah, shelter and safety from them ; and

they that have not sought Him shall seek Him then too late, in a time when He will not be found of them.

8. Thou art a place to hide me in, Thou shalt preserve me from trouble : Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

LXX. Thou art my refuge from the affliction around me.

O Thou that art my joy, deliver me from them that encompass me.

If we would be saved from everlasting trouble we must hide in Christ, and not from Christ ; He will cover our sins from us if we cover them not from Him. He Who is the love of them whom He has loved, will save them from the encompassing waters of temptation and trouble, and will encompass them with overflowing joy and songs of heavenly praise, 'as the voice of many waters.'

9. I will inform thee, and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go : and I will guide thee with Mine eye.

10. Be ye not like to horse and mule, which have no understanding : whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle, lest they fall upon thee.

After sorrow comes confession, and after confession comes pardon, and after pardon comes grace for amendment. We have found that we cannot teach ourselves the way, and that we cannot guide ourselves in it. That same all-holy Spirit which has brought us out of sin will lead us into holiness, if we patiently and willingly follow His gentle and

consoling guidance. Our own headstrong wills and evil passions would make us 'like brute beasts which have no understanding,' but the eye of the All-seeing fixed upon us directs our souls if we will have faith in Him. There is an eternal necessity that 'His Will be done;' if we will not do it with our wills, we shall be made to do it against our wills. The sinners will be driven like unruly steeds, with the sharp discipline of scourge and curb; the righteous will be ever guided by the warning or loving glance of their Master's eye.

11. Great plagues remain for the ungodly : but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, mercy embraceth him on every side.

12. Be glad, O ye righteous, and rejoice in the Lord : and be joyful, all ye that are true of heart.

'That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' There is woe for such; but for them who will do God's will, mercy is round them and close to them like the air, and love is the very atmosphere they breathe. They shall rejoice, not in themselves,—for in us there is nothing in which we can rejoice, but everything to fill us with sorrow,—but in their Lord and in His grace,—for in Him there is nothing which can make us grieve, but everything which can give us joy. Yes, the true of heart, who see that all things are ruled by the most righteous and perfect will of God,

will rejoice in all things except their own unrighteousness; above all, they will rejoice in that redeeming love which has forgiven their unrighteousness and covered their sin.

This Psalm, which is entitled "Maschil," or "a Psalm of pious instruction," was certainly written by David after his great sin in the matter of Uriah, (2 Sam. xii.) It is one of those called penitential, and is appointed by the Church to be used on the first day of Lent. The third verse clearly refers to his sufferings during that long time which he had passed in unrepentance, before God sent the prophet to him to rouse him from his self-deceiving and guilty state. There can be no truer or deeper commentary upon the words, "Blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile," than will be found in the tenth sermon of Bp. Butler, "Upon Self-deceit."

PSALM xxxiii. *Exultate, justi.*

1. REJOICE in the Lord, O ye righteous : for it becometh well the just to be thankful.

They who are earnest in doing what is right, can best rejoice in the Lord of perfect righteousness. The wrong doers can never rejoice, the repenting can only pray for mercy; but they who strive to do right, as far as they do that which they seek to do, can fulfil the charge, 'Rejoice evermore.' For they know that it is not from themselves that what they are and what they do comes, but from His grace Who gives to them that have, that they may have more abundantly; and therefore it is with them both a privilege and a duty to indulge in thanks and praise.

2. Praise the Lord with harp : sing praises

unto Him with the lute, and instrument of ten strings.

3. Sing unto the Lord a new song : sing praises lustily unto Him with a good courage.

Every faculty, therefore, of their souls and of their body, should join in gratitude to Him Who has done all in them and for them. Holy thoughts should be moved within them by holy affections and holy hope, and should come from their mouths in holy words and songs of praise. Every new gift of grace and act of mercy call for a new offering of thanksgiving and hallowed gladness to be brought, not with coldness or doubt, but in faith and joy, with singing and melody of heart unto the Lord of love.

4. For the word of the Lord is true : and all His works are faithful.

5. He loveth righteousness and judgement : the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

It is He Who is 'called Faithful and True that in righteousness doth judge,' and His name is the Word of God : that which He speaks, whether in commandment, in covenant, or in promise, is eternally true and undeceivable. 'He for His part will most surely keep and perform' all that He has said He will. And in the whole course of His providence we see that His works are according to His words. That which He has said that He loveth, His providence shews that He does love, even the doing what is right. It is not hard to trace in anything the plain workings

of His righteous government; and that He is good, not only does His word declare, but all created things, with life and without, with reason and without, by their very creation and preservation do most clearly and fully shew. 'He saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good;' and still 'He doeth all things well.'

6. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made : and all the hosts of them by the breath of His mouth.

7. He gathereth the waters of the sea together, as it were upon an heap : and layeth up the deep, as in a treasure-house.

Do we doubt His goodness, or distrust His righteousness,—at least we cannot doubt His power. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' Yea, 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.' When all things had a beginning the Word already was, and was their beginning. And all the hosts of heaven, the stars that shine in their courses, and those other brighter and more glorious beings whose paths through the sky our eyes cannot see,—the angels, and powers, and thrones,—these too owe their being to that one Almighty Lord. 'By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens.' His power extends not above only,

but beneath that world we call ours. 'God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.' The earth and the sea are His possession, which He preserves for His own almighty use.

8. Let all the earth fear the Lord : stand in awe of Him, all ye that dwell in the world.

9. For He spake, and it was done : He commanded, and it stood fast.

'I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have none other gods but Me,' is the first law which all created things proclaim, and to which all created things must yield obedience or must perish. They are only by His word; He said of each, 'Let there be: and there was.' He spake of each and all what His will was concerning it; 'and it was so.'

10. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought : and maketh the devices of the people to be of none effect, and casteth out the counsels of princes.

11. The counsel of the Lord shall endure for ever : and the thoughts of His heart from generation to generation.

Can we then confess His power, and deny His righteousness? His providence declares the second as perfectly as His creation proclaims the first. The plans and hopes of the evil come to nothing, because they are evil. No nation by its united voice can

make a wrong thing right, or a false thing true; no king, however wise or mighty, can establish evil as if it were good, nor can any power, seen or unseen. He sees all the kingdoms of the world as in a moment of time, so for a moment of time, if their counsels are not conformed to His counsel. The counsel of His kingdom only can abide, which is the working out of His most gracious law, that 'His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

12. Blessed are the people, whose God is the Lord Jehovah : and blessed are the folk, that He hath chosen to Him to be His inheritance.

Happy and blessed are they who are willing to be the servants of the one eternal God; who desire that He should be the Lord and King, not only of their lives, but of their hearts; who worship in faith and truth the Father Who is their Creator, the Son Who is their Redeemer, the Holy Ghost Who is their Sanctifier. Yea, thrice blessed are they who make Him theirs, for He will make them His; He will bring them ever more and more into obedience to that kingdom which from generation to generation He is establishing, and which joins together both earth and heaven under one common law.

13. The Lord looked down from heaven, and beheld all the children of men : from the habitation of His dwelling He considereth all them that dwell on the earth.

14. He fashioneth all the hearts of them : and understandeth all their works.

‘The Lord seeth not as man seeth,’ for He is in heaven and we upon earth. He marks the thoughts of them that dwell in the world, as He does their works. He knows as well all the workings of that inner world of the human soul, as He knows the workings of the outer world in which we live, for He has created and fashioned both.

15. There is no king that can be saved by the multitude of an host : neither is any mighty man delivered by much strength.

16. A horse is counted but a vain thing to save a man : neither shall he deliver any man by his great strength.

He not only sees all, but rules all. He is the great and only Potentate. Before Him and from Him power cannot save, multitude cannot save, pride cannot save, strength cannot save ; neither the multitude of Saul’s host, nor the much strength of Goliath, nor the seven hundred chariots and forty thousand horsemen of the Syrians, could avail against His will. ‘The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.’

17. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him : and upon them that put their trust in His mercy ;

18. To deliver their soul from death : and to feed them in the time of dearth.

What then can save us from an all-powerful and all-just King? Truly what we want is not to be saved from Him, but to be saved in Him. We see His power; we confess His justice; our need is that we should trust in His goodness. He is all-good, as He is all-mighty and all-righteous. Our doubt must be, not of His mercy, but of the realness of our trust in His mercy. His eye is indeed upon us, but in love, not in sternness. The death we dread was not of His counsel, but of ours; the curse of barrenness upon the earth we dwell in was not of His sending, but of our fetching,—‘Cursed is the ground for thy sake,’ who didst the wrong. And He delivers us, not from Himself, but from ourselves and our own deservings, ‘yea, and will deliver.’ Our souls are afraid of death, and faint with the lack of grace, and He, for their comfort and their stay, sends to us His only-begotten Son with that most gladsome message—‘I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.’ So doth He turn our earthly scarcity into heavenly fulness.

19. Our soul hath patiently tarried for the Lord : for He is our help, and our shield.

20. For our heart shall rejoice in Him : because we have hoped in His holy Name.

Let us then in faith be patient and wait. Our faith cannot fail in our patience, because He is our ever-watchful helper and defender. Let us not only be patient, but ‘rejoice in hope;’ for in Him is trea-

sured our most joyful hope. It is the holy Name of 'our Lord Jesus Christ which is our hope.'

21. Let Thy merciful kindness, O Lord, be upon us : like as we do put our trust in Thee.

And last of all, and first of all, let us love Him Who first loved us, that our love may gain His love to us again. Rather let our finiteness only bind our love to Him Who is infinite; and may His love be upon us according to the measure of His infiniteness!

This Psalm has no title, yet there is little reason for doubting that it was written by David. It was probably intended for the public service of God in the temple, and was so used in the Israelitish Church. The history of the Creation in the first chapter of Genesis seems to have been vividly present to the writer's mind while he was composing this trustful and gladsome Psalm.

PSALM XXXIV. *Benedicam Domino.*

1. I WILL alway give thanks unto the Lord : His praise shall ever be in my mouth.

2. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord : the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

3. O praise the Lord with me : and let us magnify His Name together.

Continual thanks are owing to Him Who giveth us continual blessings. A sense of His goodness must be ever in our hearts, and then words of His praise will never be wanting in our mouths. In Him may we boast without sin, and glory without

pride; and our own humbleness of spirit and self-denying shall increase our gladness in our loving Lord Who hath done so great things for us. Humility is the companion of love, for he that is proud cannot love; and therefore they that are truly humble will not stand apart and be separated, but will join with their brothers in unity of spirit and unity of voice. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord' is the Church's song of daily gratitude and joy; and he who cannot worthily take its high words into his mouth alone, may yet chant them worthily in union with the Saviour's Church.

4. I sought the Lord, and He heard me : yea, He delivered me out of all my fear.

5. They had an eye unto Him, and were lightened : and their faces were not ashamed.

They who seek for God shall find Him; 'while they are yet speaking, He will hear.' Difficulties grow smaller and fear departs away, as we draw nearer to our Lord in prayer. As we gaze upon the brightness of His truth and kindness, no longer hiding ourselves and our sins, like Adam, our faces shine with His reflected light, even as the face of Moses shone as he came down from the mount. 'He is the true Light, Which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' and they who abide in His light shall never stumble or be brought to shame. 'A man shall look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.' Their own darkness may cover for awhile the shame

of the wicked, but the light of Christ giveth confidence to the righteous.

6. Lo, the poor crieth, and the Lord heareth him : yea, and saveth him out of all his troubles.

7. The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him : and delivereth them.

It is not the rich only or the wise that the Lord will hear ; the poor crieth, and He is ready to save him, and will make him rich with His grace and wise with His salvation. He Who was poor is the Saviour of the poor ; He Whose soul was troubled will 'exalt the humble and meek' from their troubles. It may be that man despises the poor, but God cares for them. Around each one earnest soul, whatever its earthly portion may be, there are angels tarrying ; and the hosts of God, 'which alway do Him service in heaven,' are often watching 'to succour and defend on earth' the humble heart which thinks itself forgotten and alone.

8. O taste, and see, how gracious the Lord is : blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.

9. O fear the Lord, ye that are His saints : for they that fear Him lack nothing.

10. The lions do lack, and suffer hunger : but they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good.

11. LXX. The rich have become beggars, and have hungered.

O let them that hunger turn to Him Who is calling them to His marriage-feast, and they shall be filled: let them who mourn their sin turn to Him Who is waiting to be gracious, and they shall find pardon and rest. Trust in His own word and promise, taste and see, and know His graciousness. Unless we know Him, the knowledge of ourselves will fill us with despair; therefore must we trust in Him. Unless we know ourselves and our own sinfulness, the knowledge of Him and of His mercy would lead us to presumption; therefore must we fear Him. His saints will have His faith and fear on the right hand and on the left, and in their Lord they will need nothing. The children of the wicked one, however strong in their power and riches, shall 'be sent empty away,' for that they have turned from Him from Whom all that is good comes; but they who seek Him in humility and faith shall both possess Him and be possessed by Him Who is perfect goodness.

11. Come, ye children, and hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

12. What man is he that lusteth to live : and would fain see good days ?

13. Keep thy tongue from evil : and thy lips, that they speak no guile.

14. Eschew evil, and do good .: seek peace, and ensue it.

To such the voice of the uncreated Wisdom ever

cries, 'Unto you, O men, I call; and My voice is unto the sons of man. Now, therefore, hearken unto Me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep My ways.' Surely there are none that hate life, and none would have the days of their pilgrimage to be few and evil! Life and happiness are the great ends of our being, and all our strivings are but efforts after them; and He Who gave us our being, and set those ends before us, can best teach how we may attain unto them. First, our tongue must be tamed, and kept from malice and from falsehood; and that the lips may be right, the heart must be so too, for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' Next, we must 'cease to do evil and learn to do well;' for if we would enter into life we must 'keep the commandments.' And last, we must go to Him Who is able to give us peace from that law in our members which warreth against the law of our mind, Who only can set us free from our evil passions and ourselves, Who only can loose us 'from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed,' and Who has purchased for us quietness of conscience and the fulness of peace. We must seek Him until we have found Him, and when we have found Him we must follow after Him. Thus, then, do both covenants declare that the fear of God is the true wisdom, and that obedience to His laws is the way of peace; and by the mouth of two witnesses, the prophet David and the apostle St. Peter, is this most true word established.

15. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous : and His ears are open unto their prayers.

16. The countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil : to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.

Peace is upon all them who live according to this rule. The Lord of all watches their works, and hears their prayers, and accepts their faith, and guides them to Himself. He watches, too, them who break His laws, who eschew good and do evil, but it is in anger and in judgment. He gives them up to themselves ; for they are lusting for death, and would fain see evil days ; they are seeking to perish, they are storing up eternal sorrows ; they are ‘ twice dead, plucked up by the roots’ on earth, and ‘ without fruit’ in heaven.

17. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth them : and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

18. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart : and will save such as be of an humble spirit.

‘ And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye ; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled ; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.’

19. Great are the troubles of the right-

eous : but the Lord delivereth him out of all.

20. He keepeth all his bones : so that not one of them is broken.

‘For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.’ Even the Son of God was hung between the thieves upon the cross for sins; and the soldiers brake the legs of them that were crucified with Him; ‘but when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs, for these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.’ If, then, the watchful care of the Father was over the true Paschal Lamb as He was stretched dead upon the cross, so also will it be over each one of the members of His living body, who suffers like his suffering Lord. He will keep them all, so that not one of them be lost.

21. But misfortune shall slay the ungodly : and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

LXX. The death of sinners is wretched.

22. The Lord delivereth the souls of His servants : and all they that put their trust in Him shall not be destitute.

There are two paths through this world, one used by them who trust in themselves, the other by them who trust in God. For awhile they seem to run together. Sometimes the path of the ungodly seems the pleasantest. But we must look to the end of both of them. The one ends in misery, loneliness, and death. They who are selfish will be left unto themselves. A life without God ends naturally with a death without God. The end of the other is deliverance and comfort. The God Whom the believer has not left will not leave him. The darkness of death is but somewhat that hides the light of life from his sight; it passes over him for a moment and is cleared away: his soul is delivered from it for evermore.

The title of this Psalm is, "Of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed." The LXX. translate it, "when he changed his countenance," but it may be rendered, "when he concealed his intellect." The event in David's life which occasioned it will be found related in 1 Sam. xxi. 10—15. Psalm lvi. also refers to the same occasion. We are told that David fled to Achish, king of Gath, for fear of Saul. Now it would seem that Abimelech was the usual title of the Philistine princes, (compare Gen. xx. and xxvi.,) as Pharaoh was that of the Egyptian kings, and Agag that of the princes of the Amalekite tribes. It appears that suspicions were awakened in the mind of Achish by his courtiers, who put him in remembrance of the triumph which David had achieved over the Philistine champion, and the fame he had acquired by it; and that David, in order to save his life, was compelled to feign himself mad, and thereupon was driven away by Achish, and obliged to return into Judæa, and to take refuge in the cave of Adullam. The troubles which he thus unjustly and undeservingly endured only increased his faith in the truth and righteousness of God, which he accordingly declares in this Psalm. The Psalm is alphabetic, and is marked by the general character of such Psalms. Verses 12—16 are quoted by St. Peter, (1 Peter iii. 10—13,) in his exhortation to

the Christians who were then under persecution and suffering unjustly, as David suffered; and it cannot be doubted that verse 20 contains a prophetic allusion to the crucifixion of the Son of God, of Whom, as of the Paschal Lamb, not a bone was to be broken. (St. John xix. 31—37).

Morning Prayer.

PSALM XXXV. *Judica, Domine.*

1. PLEAD 'Thou my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me : and fight Thou against them that fight against me.

2. Lay hand upon the shield and buckler : and stand up to help me.

3. Bring forth the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me : say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

God has engaged ever to be with His own, and to help them. His own promise is, 'I will contend with him that contendeth with thee;' therefore they may ever appeal from the injustice of man to the justice of God, and from the violence of man to the help of God. They can surely trust in His loving-kindness and goodness, as in a shield of defence; and His judgments upon the unjust and unmerciful will be like a spear brandished in their way, when 'He whets His glittering sword, and His hand takes hold on judgment.' But He will not only aid them, but will make them know that He aids them. If, therefore, His voice come to their soul in their distress, saying, 'I am thy salvation,'

and He Who speaks it opens the ears of their soul that they may hear it plainly, what can the strife of enemies or the confusion of the world do to daunt or stop them? 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

4. Let them be confounded, and put to shame, that seek after my soul : let them be turned back, and brought to confusion, that imagine mischief for me.

5. Let them be as the dust before the wind : and the angel of the Lord scattering them.

6. Let their way be dark and slippery : and let the angel of the Lord persecute them.

They who injure others' souls, and indulge malice and evil wishes against them, can have nothing better happen to them than that they should be made ashamed and should be turned back, and that their plans should be confounded. But if they still persist against the warnings both of God's law and of His providence, then, by a special act of judgment, which He will commission His appointed messenger to perform, He will scatter their devices like dust before the wind ; and He will hurry them away from the scene of their evil deeds, by a path dark with horror and slippery with danger, with the avenging minister of His wrath hard behind them.

7. For they have privily laid their net to destroy me without a cause : yea, even with-

out a cause have they made a pit for my soul.

8. Let a sudden destruction come upon him unawares, and his net, that he hath laid privily, catch himself : that he may fall into his own mischief.

For the righteous indignation of men, when they see one joining treachery to cruelty and injustice in his actions, and their eager exultation when the treacherous dealer himself is caught in the snare which he intended for another, and is punished by his own acts, this feeling is but an instinctive acknowledgement of the eternal law of providence, that no evil shall go uncorrected, and that no deceit shall be unconfounded. The Lord is God ; and ‘the deceived and the deceiver are His.’

9. And, my soul, be joyful in the Lord : it shall rejoice in His salvation.

10. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto Thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him : yea, the poor, and him that is in misery, from him that spoileth him ?

In the destruction of wrong we see God’s righteousness, no less than in the preserving of right : from both His justice and His mercy does that voice sound plainly forth in the ears of the believer’s soul — ‘I am Thy salvation.’ With what joy did the holy men of old listen to those words ! how must they

have exulted in their inmost soul, with all their life and strength, in that righteous God Who took the part of the despised and the oppressed against the proud and the tyrannical; Whose dearest attribute is that He forgets not the poor and the suffering, but sets them free from those who trample on them and care not for them, and wrong His law of love; 'for He that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.'

11. False witnesses did rise up : they laid to my charge things that I knew not.

12. They rewarded me evil for good : to the great discomfort of my soul.

13. Nevertheless, when they were sick, I put on sackcloth, and humbled my soul with fasting : and my prayer shall turn into mine own bosom.

14. I behaved myself as though it had been my friend, or my brother : I went heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.

But how did God confound the scornful and the unloving, and cause the treacherous to perish by their own deceit? By coming Himself among them as innocent, and poor, and sorrowing. Their Judge came to them, and they did not know Him; they treated Him as they had been used to treat the helpless and the poor. They sat in judgment upon their Lord. They laid sin to the charge of Him 'Who knew no sin.' He was most innocent of all things

blameful, and there was no fault found in Him, and they 'sought for witness against Him to put Him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together.' Against Him Who 'was daily in the temple teaching' them the words of truth, they came out as against a thief: and yet it was for the cure of their sickness and corruption that He had clothed Himself with mortal flesh, that He had humbled Himself to our want and need; yea, that He had prayed upon the bitter tree, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,' before He bowed His head and died. And this for the transgression of 'the mother of all living,' and for the sin of 'His own familiar friends,' even of them whom 'He is not ashamed to call brethren.' All His life through, in sorrow and in shame, had He been yearning to bring them to the obedience of the children of God, for He said, 'Whosoever shall do the will of My Father Which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.' Surely, then, they who suffer and are hardly treated may be patient, and pray even for them who care not for them, seeing that their Saviour suffered and was patient, Who was Lord of all.

15. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the very abjects came together against me unawares, making mouths at me, and ceased not.

16. With the flatterers were busy mockers :
who gnashed upon me with their teeth.

LXX. And they rejoiced against me and came together :

The scourges came together upon me, and I knew
it not.

They were scattered, and had no compunction.

They tempted me ; they sneered at me with a sneer :

They gnashed their teeth upon me.

The mockeries and insults which the faithful sometimes have to endure for acting holily, the sneers with which the truth is often received, must neither discourage us from doing right, nor deter us from asserting the truth when the time calls for it. It may be met with contempt, and may call forth hatred and dislike among them who have thrown aside all rectitude and self-respect, but still it must be spoken in love. It is ever a type of Him Who was Himself the Truth : for Christ was foreshadowed by every suffering which any righteous man suffered because of his righteousness. On Him did 'they begin to spit, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say to Him, Prophecy : and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.'

17. Lord, how long wilt Thou look upon
this : O deliver my soul from the calamities
which they bring on me, and my darling from
the lions.

18. So will I give Thee thanks in the great
congregation : I will praise Thee among much
people.

Yes, and every deliverance which a righteous man waited for in patience, and at length obtained, because of his righteousness, foreshadowed also the Son of God. Noah in his preaching, Job in his patience, Joseph in the pit, David in his persecution, each shewed forth the coming of that pattern Man Who was most perfect in His patience, as in His righteousness. He waited, and He was delivered from both death and hell; and so by His patient love He preserved the Church of His redeemed, and brought the peoples of the world to the knowledge and the praise of the Father.

19. O let not them that are mine enemies triumph over me ungodly : neither let them wink with their eyes that hate me without a cause.

20. And why ? their communing is not for peace : but they imagine deceitful words against them that are quiet in the land.

LXX. For they spoke to me indeed peacefully ;
And in their wrath they planned deceits.

It was not for the harm that He did to them that they hated Him, but for the love He bore towards them. He said, 'If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause.' And His enemies gave free course to their ungodli-

ness ; they ‘ went and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk !’ They came to Him with crafty hypocrisy, looking meekly with their eyes, but hiding hatred and malice in their hearts ; and they falsely, and yet at the same time truly, said, ‘ Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man : for Thou regardest not the person of men.’ But He ‘ perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites ?’ Shall the Master thus be tried, and the disciple escape ? Yea, He was tried that His followers might escape.

21. They gaped upon me with their mouths, and said : Fie on thee, fie on thee, we saw it with our eyes.

22. This Thou hast seen, O Lord : hold not Thy tongue then, go not far from me, O Lord.

23. Awake, and stand up to judge my quarrel : avenge Thou my cause, my God, and my Lord.

The lions who sought to devour His soul fawned on Him at first in treachery, but within a little they opened their jaws against Him in open rage. They asked of Him and He answered them, that He was indeed the Son of Man, the Lord of power ; and ‘ then the high-priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy ; what further need have we of witnesses ? Behold, now ye have heard His blas-

phemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.' And so when the holy martyr Stephen spoke to them of their treachery and murder, 'they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed upon him with their teeth;' while he committed all his cause into the hands of the Lord, Who had suffered unjustly too, and 'saw the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' For man may be a judge, but he is not the Judge; they may say that they have seen, but God has seen too.

24. Judge me, O Lord my God, according to Thy righteousness : and let them not triumph over me.

25. Let them not say in their hearts, There, there, so would we have it : neither let them say, We have devoured him.

26. Let them be put to confusion and shame together, that rejoice at my trouble : let them be clothed with rebuke and dishonour, that boast themselves against me.

27. Let them be glad and rejoice, that favour my righteous dealing : yea, let them say alway, Blessed be the Lord, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.

God is and must be the Judge; and with Him right will and must prevail. For a little while the violent may carry things their own way, the wicked for a little while may think that he has swallowed

up the righteous. 'There is a time of trial marked out both to the evil and to the good, the evil are tried by their own way being given to them; the good are tried by their liberty being taken from them. But when the time of trial is ended, the due course of God's holy government will again go on, and they who are confirmed in evil-doing, the oppressors and the mockers, will be brought to misery and ruin: malice will be turned upon itself; while patience and love for holiness and obedience will be made perfect, and will prosper in the pleasure of the All-just. They who have endured will bless Him Who tried them for their trial. So the Jewish Church which scorned at and slew the Lord of Glory, was sent as a mourner and a wanderer throughout the earth; while the Christian Church through persecutions and trials hath prospered, even to 'dwelling in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.'

28. And as for my tongue, it shall be talking of Thy righteousness : and of Thy praise all the day long.


The firm knowledge of this, founded both on experience and on faith, will lead us to make our Almighty Father's righteousness the constant subject of our thoughts and words; and thus to praise Him continually. Yea, the highest praise we can offer to Him is to do His righteous will; for he that does no wrong praises God continually, and he that does right hallows His Name for evermore.

The opening verses of this Psalm seem so plainly to express David's wish to Saul,—“The Lord therefore judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand,” (1 Sam. xxiv. 15,)—that it must be referred with the other Psalms of the same character to that part of David's life. Verse 19 is applied by our blessed Lord to Himself, (St. John xv. 25); and there are other verses which, if not directly prophetic of events in our Lord's life, yet present an obvious reference to them to the mind of the Christian. The indignation of David, “speaking by the Holy Ghost,” against the wicked and treacherous, is so strongly and vividly expressed in certain passages of this Psalm, that it may be well for the reader to bear in mind, in regard to such Psalms as resemble it, as, for instance, Psalms v., x., xxviii., xl., lii., lv., lviii., lix., lxix., cix., the following rules for their interpretation. Expressions of this kind which occur in Holy Scripture may be understood in three ways. 1. as the pronouncing a prophecy, not as the expression of a wish; as in verse 6 of this Psalm we may read, “Their way shall be dark and slippery, and the angel of the Lord shall persecute them.” Or, 2. as an expression of desire, but so expressed as to refer, not to the punishment of the guilty, but to the righteousness of the punisher; as in Psalm lviii. 9,—“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance;” for God Himself has no pleasure in the punishment of the ungodly, but only in His own righteousness,—“for the righteous loveth righteousness.” Or, 3. the expression of a wish for punishment may be referred to the guilt itself, and not to the guilty person, so that the sin should be destroyed, but the sinner be preserved. The fathers generally adopt the last of these modes of interpretation; while modern critics advocate the adoption of the first, on the ground that in Hebrew the imperative mood and the future tense are often used the one for the other.

PSALM xxxvi. *Dixit injustus.*

1. My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly : that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

2. For he flattereth himself in his own sight : until his abominable sin be found out.



Heb. The oracle of the Evil one to the wicked is within my heart.

There is no fear of God before his eyes.

For he flatters himself in his own eyes,

As to the finding out of his sin of hatred.

They who cease to listen to the Spirit of holiness open their hearts to the inspiration of the spirit of darkness. There is no more dreadful subject of contemplation, than the state of those who have utterly cast away the fear of God, and who act and live only by the suggestions of the Evil one. They are led captive by him at his evil will, and they do not know it. They flatter themselves that they have gained a sort of liberty and freedom, because they have rejected the law of God; they cannot see, for the evil spirit will not let them see, how deeply their souls are lost, and how at last their evil doings must come to an evil end. They desire to stifle the conviction that their hatred and rebellion must at length exhaust God's love and patience.

3. The words of his mouth are unrighteous, and full of deceit : he hath left off to behave himself wisely, and to do good.

4. He imagineth mischief upon his bed, and hath set himself in no good way : neither doth he abhor any thing that is evil.

At the prompting of the father of lies they become altogether false in both their hearts and words; instead of leaving off to behave wickedly and to do wrong, they leave off behaving wisely and doing right. Their repentance is of their good

deeds, not of their evil ones ; their shame is of their better feelings, not of their viler ones. ‘They sleep not, except they have done mischief.’ In the restlessness and wakefulness of an evil conscience, they look forward to going on in their recklessness. They make up their minds not to change or alter, for they have got at last to see nothing wrong in sin.

5. Thy mercy, O Lord, reacheth unto the heavens : and Thy faithfulness unto the clouds.

6. Thy righteousness standeth like the strong mountains : Thy judgements are like the great deep.

It is a trial and temptation to see men living in the world and acting thus ; but let the temptation be never so great or deep, the mercy and faithfulness of God are higher and deeper far. There is a wondrous distance between heaven, where all is holy, and earth, whereon the servants of the wicked one are allowed to live ; and yet God’s love will span it. Like the pillar of cloud and fire separated between the Israelites and the Egyptians, so do His mercy and truth separate between His children and the children of wrath. Whatever the wicked may think or do, the eternal righteousness of God remains obvious, strong, unmoved, as a mighty mountain ; and His judgments come forth from time to time like the rushing of a flood of waters, sweeping away into the deep of destruction all that is corrupt, unclean, and vile. They are high, and to be seen by

all; deep, and to be fathomed by none. Yea, we are placed in the midst of the mercies and the judgments of our God, even as the earth is between the heavens and the deep.

7. Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast; How excellent is Thy mercy, O God: and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.

He Who watched over the Church and the creatures in the ark will ever preserve His own. Not one of His creatures is beyond His providence and His care. Five sparrows are sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God: how much more will He, Who remembers the sparrows, remember His elect! His mercy is past all human thought to understand, which yet extendeth over all His works. And beneath the shadow of the hands which He stretches out for us shall we find unceasingly both hope and peace.

8. They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house: and Thou shalt give them drink of Thy pleasures, as out of the river.

9. For with Thee is the well of life: and in Thy light shall we see light.

In His house, which is His Church, there is not only a refuge for the harassed and a resting-place for the weary, but an ever-ready banquet spread for all. The Bread of heaven is there offered to the

hungry; the Cup of life is waiting for the thirsty; the way to the fourfold river, once closed by cherubim and barred with fire, is now again made open by Him Who never ceases calling, 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary, and I will refresh you.' In Him and in His wounded side is the fountain of eternal life, for He Himself is life, 'and the life is the light of men,' and in Him and through Him shall we who are His see light.

10. O continue forth Thy loving-kindness unto them that know Thee : and Thy righteousness unto them that are true of heart.

If we forsake not Him, He will never forsake us. They that know Him will know His love, and they who have once known it shall know it for evermore. Our ignorance and negligence it is that makes us doubt; but they who are true of heart themselves can never for a moment distrust the truth and righteousness of God.

11. O let not the foot of pride come against me : and let not the hand of the ungodly cast me down.

In Him Who humbled Himself for us is our safeguard against the approach of pride, either in ourselves or in others; above all, against the approach of him who through his pride fell, and who is ever seeking to draw down others too. It is the power of our King which only can restrain the hand of the Evil one, that he touch us not to make us fall.

12. There are they fallen, all that work wickedness : they are cast down, and shall not be able to stand.

From the watch-tower of faith, from the battlements of the House of God, the believer sees the wicked afar off stumble and perish. Where they exalted themselves, there shall they fall; ‘and their casting-down shall be in the midst of them.’ They follow their works, and their master, whose work they chose, to that ruin which is their doom. The right shall stand, The wrong shall perish,—these are the everlasting decrees of God, standing firm as the mountains, and though they be executed slowly, yet are they most certain. The wickedness and self-deceit of the ungodly are nothing: the righteousness and mercifulness of God are everything.

This Psalm, which is inscribed “to the chief Musician, by the servant of God, David,” is of a similar character to the fourteenth; but in it the trustfulness and confidence of the prophet in the truth and justice of God come out more clear and plain. David is called in the title the “servant of God,” as if the thoughts which he dwells on had so wrought within his mind that he was determined to trample down the doubts and temptations which the evil days brought to him, and to give himself up to be the servant of God, and of Him only. The word in the first verse which has been rendered *oracle* is the word used for *prophetic inspiration* and its use warns us that there is an inspiration from the evil spirit for them who resist the Holy Spirit.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM xxxvii. *Noli æmulari.*

1. FRET not thyself because of the ungodly : neither be thou envious against the evil doers.

2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass : and be withered even as the green herb.

All, even the God-seeking, feel too deeply the influence of this fretful life. They are in a hurry that what is wrong should be made right. They would have all things at once made perfect, and nothing bad or inconsistent left even for a moment. They are inclined to repine even at the long-suffering of God which gives the ungodly time to repent and the evil-doers time to leave off doing evil. Yet though He is long-suffering, He is also just : He gives the wicked time ; but in that time either their sins or themselves will be destroyed. They are on their trial. The good and the bad alike grow together in the field, they have the sun shining on both alike, the rain falling on both alike ; there is time for both, and grace for both, until the harvest. Then the reapers cut them down, and the distinction at last is made : the one are for the garner, the other for destruction. There will be no cause to envy the bad then ; therefore there is none now.

3. Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good : dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

4. Delight thou in the Lord : and He shall give thee thy heart's desire.

Look we to ourselves, to correct ourselves ; and to God, to trust in Him. If we will do our work,—that

which He has given us to do,—we need have no fear but that He will do His. Let us dwell in the world, as in His world, not our own; as using it, and not abusing it; and He will feed us, Who calls Himself the Good Shepherd. Yea, He will give us each day our daily bread. In Him must we rejoice, Whose we are. If Christ be ours, what need we of other pleasures? Let ‘the Desire of all nations’ be to each one of us our heart’s desire, and He shall be given unto us, as we have been given unto Him.

5. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him : and He shall bring it to pass.

6. He shall make thy righteousness as clear as the light : and thy just dealing as the noon-day.

This is a world of confusion : here things are not as they should be. God’s will is not yet done on earth, as it is in heaven. If it had been so, there would not have needed the toil and suffering, the agony and bloody sweat of the Son of God, to set right what man had set wrong. But He, Who can remedy it, is remedying. ‘His Father worketh hitherto, and He worketh.’ ‘Commit we the keeping of our souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator,’ and He will at length make right most plainly right, and wrong most plainly wrong; and in Him and through Him shall ‘they that be wise shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they

that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.'

7. Hold thee still in the Lord, and abide patiently upon Him : but grieve not thyself at him, whose way doth prosper, against the man that doeth after evil counsels.

God is patient, though He is strong. Let us be patient, like Him. He bears with the wicked ; He even allows him to do prosperously, not indeed through his bad intentions, but in spite of his bad intentions. It may be that He is trying to soften him by love, to wean him from his sins by mercy. What know we of His Almighty plans of salvation, that we should repine, when He is patient still ?

8. Leave off from wrath, and let go displeasure : fret not thyself, else shalt thou be moved to do evil.

9. Wicked doers shall be rooted out : and they that patiently abide the Lord, those shall inherit the land.

They who have this trust in God will not let their own anger or jealousy overcome them. Impatience and repining are not far off from sin. They who let their feelings, at the riches or power of the wicked, get the mastery over them, will come into the same temptation to which those whom they envy have yielded. How often, in them who seemed to be righteous, has prosperity destroyed what sorrow and trouble might have preserved,—humility, and trust-

fulness, and kindness to others. None could tell us this better than David, who had been so sorely tempted 'to avenge himself with his own hand upon Nabal,' who had returned him evil for good, and yet at last could say, 'Blessed be the Lord, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept His servant from evil; for the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head.' But they who do right shall inherit not earth only, but also heaven.

10. Yet a little while, and the ungodly shall be clean gone : thou shalt look after his place, and he shall be away.

11. But the meek-spirited shall possess the earth : and shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace.

Yet a little while,—for the longest time is but a little while in the working of the Almighty's plans,—and the persevering sinner will be away. He will have followed his works. Sin destroys itself. His place on the earth will be empty; he will have gone 'to his own place.' But the blessing of the Lord shall stand unalterable for ever,—'Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.' The quiet of spirit shall have in fulness that which their spirit longs for—peace which none shall trouble, comfort which nought can mar.

12. The ungodly seeketh counsel against the just : and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

13. The Lord shall laugh him to scorn : for He hath seen that his day is coming.

But the wicked may not only be prosperous and powerful, he may also be cruel and persecuting. If it be so, trust in God will conquer him even then. He beholdeth both his iniquity and his doom, Who under the covenant of works is set forth to us as scorning at sin, but not as weeping for it ; while under the covenant of grace He is shewn to us as weeping, but never is recorded to have laughed.

14. The ungodly have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow : to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of a right conversation.

15. Their sword shall go through their own heart : and their bow shall be broken.

They may draw the sword of cruelty, and make ready their artillery of blasphemous and unbelieving speeches. They may trust by their ungodly arguments to pervert the ignorant and the poor, and by their threatenings and tyranny to destroy those whose faith and life are right : the King of truth mocks at their efforts. Their unbelief casts down themselves by a most deadly fall ; their tyranny slays their own soul, and cuts them off from love and life.

16. A small thing that the righteous hath : is better than great riches of the ungodly.

17. For the arms of the ungodly shall be

broken : and the Lord upholdeth the righteous.

Therefore it is better to fear God and to be contented, than to have great riches without His fear. Our daily bread, and our Father's daily blessing upon it, is all that we need : it may seem to us but a small thing, yet is it that which our Saviour bids us ask for. If we could but have 'faith as a grain of mustard-seed,' we should stay ourselves in confidence upon that everlasting arm, which shall strike down the power and the schemes of the wicked, and shall uphold the righteous in life and in death.

18. The Lord knoweth the days of the godly : and their inheritance shall endure for ever.

19. They shall not be confounded in the perilous time : and in the days of dearth they shall have enough.

They may have but a little here ; but they shall have all hereafter. 'They shall have a better and an enduring substance.' Their inheritance is of an unending possession. Their life is in the hands of Him, Who will deliver them 'in all time of their tribulation, and in all time of their wealth ;' in that perilous time when all things go well with them, and in the days of trouble, of poverty, and of despondency.

20. As for the ungodly, they shall perish ; and the enemies of the Lord shall consume as the fat of lambs : yea, even as the smoke, shall they consume away.

Heb. Truly the wicked shall perish ;

Even the enemies of the Lord, as the excellence of
lambs,

They vanish, like smoke they vanish.

LXX. Because the sinners shall be destroyed,

And the enemies of the Lord in their glorying and
exaltation ;

Vanishing, they have vanished like smoke.

With the righteous all is abiding ; with the wicked
all is perishing. Like the green pasture, in which
the lambs rejoice in the spring, withers and dis-
appears before the scorching heat ; like the smoke
which curls high into the air from a burning sacri-
fice, and then utterly vanishes and is lost ; so is the
wrath and pride of them who are without God. It
goes away none can tell whither.

21. The ungodly borroweth, and payeth
not again : but the righteous is merciful, and
liberal.

22. Such as are blessed of God shall pos-
sess the land : and they that are cursed of
Him shall be rooted out.

LXX. They who bless Him shall inherit the land.

And they who blaspheme Him shall utterly perish.

So swiftly does the doom he has made his own
come upon the ungodly, that he has not time even
to restore that which he has borrowed. He who has
paid nothing back for the time and opportunities
which have been lent unto him, shall not long be
allowed to defraud eternal justice ; the last farthing
of eternity shall be for ever being paid by him, and
still for ever due. While upon them that fulfil the

will of God, His blessing shall be in turn fulfilled : — ‘Thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow :’ for they who bless God shall receive a blessing from Him, and He shall reserve them their portion both in earth and heaven ; and they who insult His holiness shall perish as an accursed thing ; for ‘cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, and in his heart goeth from the Lord.’

23. The Lord ordereth a good man’s going : and maketh his way acceptable to Himself.

24. Though he fall, he shall not be cast away : for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.

He sets the way before us, and sets us in the way, Who is Himself the way. They who are found in Him are in the way. He calls us, and gives us grace to obey His calling ; He teaches us, and gives us grace to fulfil His teaching. If we fall, He gives us grace to rise again ; and none can fall finally unless they fall wilfully. His hand is always ready to aid them who are trusting to His aid. ‘If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and He is the propitiation for our sins.’

25. I have been young, and now am old : and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.

26. The righteous is ever merciful, and lendeth : and his seed is blessed.

This is the testimony of a holy man of God, of one who had seen much of the ways of the Almighty, both when he was young, as a shepherd-boy, and when he was old, as a king. He had seen the end of Samuel the man of peace and Saul the man of war, of Jonathan the humble-minded and Absalom the beautiful, of Goliath the strong and Barzillai the aged : and his experience made him say, that he had never seen the righteous forsaken ; and that not only did the watchful care of God guard over His own, but it went on to the second and third generation too. There is a blessing in obedience which is not quickly forfeited, but which extends to children and to children's children. And surely they who trust to Him for grace may trust to Him for bread. Yea, they who obey Him have enough in this present life not only for themselves, but for charity and mercy too ; and both to them and to theirs shall the blessing be spoken, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive'—what? the same that they have given? What they gave was earthly: they lent to their Lord the things that perish ; but they are in return to receive 'the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.'

27. Flee from evil, and do the thing that is good : and dwell for evermore.

28. For the Lord loveth the thing that is right : He forsaketh not His that be godly, but they are preserved for ever.

29. The unrighteous shall be punished :

as for the seed of the ungodly, it shall be rooted out.

Heb. The Lord loves judgment ;
He forsakes not His saints ;
They are preserved for ever ;
But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

30. The righteous shall inherit the land :
and dwell therein for ever.

Do right, and leave wrong undone, for this is God's will ; and 'he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' That which is right God loves,—it is His attribute ; He would not be God if He did not ; and they who love it also share so far with Him in His attribute. 'Let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil ; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.' 'He that hath the Son hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.'

31. The mouth of the righteous is exercised in wisdom : and his tongue will be talking of judgement.

32. The law of his God is in his heart :
and his goings shall not slide.

Men may be known by their words as well as by their actions. They who are holy will speak holily. They will talk of the righteous judgment which God is ever exercising in the world, and

which He will one day accomplish and fulfil—of that righteous law by which He governs and orders all things in earth and heaven, and which He will finally magnify before all His creatures. He who has this law fixed in his heart will walk surely, because he will walk uprightly.

33. The ungodly seeth the righteous : and seeketh occasion to slay him.

34. The Lord will not leave him in his hand : nor condemn him when he is judged.

It may be that the bad will try to get rid of the good; for their very existence, when they see it, is a reproach to themselves. But the Lord Whom they serve will help them; their judgment is in His hand, not in the hand of man. If they are condemned by man, yet they are absolved by God.

35. Hope thou in the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall promote thee, that thou shalt possess the land : when the ungodly shall perish, thou shalt see it.

As yet we have not the things we wait for; but we hope for them. Hope we in God, and keep we His way, so shall we have them. Keep we His way, not our own ways; for what are our own ways but our sins? So shall we arrive at the eternal Canaan, and shall see when all that is vile, wrong, and false comes to nothing, and is destroyed at the revelation of Almighty righteousness.

36. I myself have seen the ungodly in great

power : and flourishing like a green bay-tree.

Heb. I saw a wicked man, who was tyrannical,
And spreading himself forth like a deep-rooted one,
a green one.

37. I went by, and lo, he was gone : I sought him, but his place could no where be found.

We have heard the testimony of David respecting the obedient and the faithful ; let us now hear his experience concerning the wicked. He had often seen them that are ungodly flourishing, and strong, and prosperous, doing as they would with what they considered their own, and defying any to hinder them. This was a trial to his faith, and he felt it so. But before long a most strange change came over the object of his perplexity. He was gone : he had broken those rules which God will not have broken ; and he had had to take the consequences of his act. He had passed away, deep-rooted though he seemed, and had left no mark behind him. The strong tree with its many branches was gone, even like the verdure of the grass that is withered. How many a tree is there covered with leaves, and making a show from a great distance off, which, for its lack of fruit, shall be ‘dried up from the roots ;’ and they who see it, like the disciples going to Jerusalem, shall ‘marvel, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away !’

38. Keep innocency, and take heed unto



the thing that is right : for that shall bring a man peace at the last.

39. As for the transgressors, they shall perish together : and the end of the ungodly is, they shall be rooted out at the last.

To keep our innocence, which was given to us as members of Christ—this is the blessing of blessings ! And if this be denied us, ‘through the fraud and malice of the devil, or our own carnal will and frailness,’ then to repent of the wrong we have done, and to follow with new earnestness that which is right, this is the way to peace,—peace in the hour of death, and pardon in the day of judgment. But they who take no heed to what is right, who wantonly break the laws of right, shall perish, be they many or few, together and altogether. The accomplishing of God’s providence, the end of the universe, will be the utter ceasing of sin and of sinners, and the firm establishing of unceasing holiness and peace.

40. But the salvation of the righteous cometh of the Lord : who is also their strength in the time of trouble.

41. And the Lord shall stand by them, and save them : He shall deliver them from the ungodly, and shall save them, because they put their trust in Him.

But all is from God. The ceasing of the wicked, the salvation of the righteous is His doing, Who doeth all things well. They that are faithful will not make

haste—they will be patient, and wait for God. He will strengthen them in trouble, and will save them by it; He will deliver them from the ungodly and will save them from them; for He is eternally faithful and true to His word, if we be only faithful and true to Him.

That this Psalm was written by David when he was old is clear from verse 25. In it he gives the whole experience of his life with regard to the course of God's providence; and on that subject few could have a better right to speak with authority than David. He had been humble and unknown, he had obtained glory, he had suffered from calumny, from open violence, from secret plots; he had been pursued by his enemies, he had been betrayed by his friends, nay, even by his own children; he had gained a throne, had been driven from it, and had been restored to it again; he had contended with enemies in war, and had ruled over a large nation in peace; he was a poet, a prophet, a lawgiver, a warrior, and a king; he seemed to have borne in himself well-nigh all the chances of human life, and in this Psalm he sums up what he had learned. He sums up all his teaching in the one truth, that faith in God's dealings, as being ever righteous in spite of appearances, and resignation to His providence, as being ever just and right, will support any man in any trials. Through almost all the Psalms from the first, and especially in those of David, there is to be found a constant reference to trouble, persecution, sinners, ungodly and blasphemous men or powers; there are traces of a world of sorrow and perverseness even in their most exalted and joyous strains: it will be well for the spiritual reader to keep these traces always in view, as hints for his own consolation and instruction in days of rebuke and trial. In the present Psalm this contrast of good and bad, holiness and sin, which had been an under-current in other Psalms, is brought out plainly and definitely. Right must be right, and wrong must be wrong, before God, and with Him, whatever men may think, say, or do. The Psalm in the original is alphabetical, but so composed that every other verse generally begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in succession. It is not without some ground that these alphabetical Psalms have been said to teach the elements and first principles of the knowledge of God. 4

Morning Prayer.

FOR ASH-WEDNESDAY, THE THIRD PENITENTIAL PSALM.

PSALM xxxviii. *Domine, ne in furore.*

1. PUT me not to rebuke, O Lord, in Thine anger : neither chasten me in Thy heavy displeasure.

2. For Thine arrows stick fast in me : and Thy hand presseth me sore.

The soul which has seen its sins can for awhile only groan at the wretchedness of the sight. It feels that rebuke and chastisement are its proper lot; it can only cry to the Lord, against Whom it has rebelled, that His rebuke may not be the rebuke of wrath, nor His chastisement that of severe anger. The higher the grace from which it has fallen, and the more effectual the grace which raises it up, the deeper do the memories pierce of the things it has done, and the heavier does the thought weigh upon it of its ungratefulness and vileness. With what sharpness of both shame and fear must those words have struck to David's heart, when God sent to him by the prophet Nathan the message—'Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I

would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.'

3. There is no health in my flesh, because of Thy displeasure : neither is there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin.

4. For my wickednesses are gone over my head : and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear.

Self-distrust and self-contempt have the perfect mastery over him who has thus sinned in despite of God. He feels that there is no counsel, no comfort in himself, that his reliance on himself is less than nothing. His sin and his wickedness is all that is his own. The ever-increasing mass of guilt which his conscience heaps up in witness against him makes him despair; the burden is one which he can never carry home.

5. My wounds stink, and are corrupt : through my foolishness.

6. I am brought into so great trouble and misery : that I go mourning all the day long.

They are not fresh wounds only with which his 'heart is wounded within him,' and his conscience

bleeds, but old, long-forgotten, unrepented crimes come forth again, which have long been festering in the soul and polluting the moral being. How often does a sin done perhaps long ago in youth, and yet never repented of or atoned for, remain hidden in the soul, like an ulcer, poisoning the very springs of the spiritual life, and bringing upon the sinner at the last trouble and misery unspeakable! Not days of mourning, nor nights of tears, can remedy the loss which the folly of unrepentance and carelessness has too often caused.

7. For my loins are filled with a sore disease : and there is no whole part in my body.

8. I am feeble, and sore smitten : I have roared for the very disquietness of my heart.

For neglected wilful sins are not merely an outward witness against the sinner, nor even scars and wounds upon his moral nature, but at last they seem to enter into his very being, to get possession of his whole existence. Looking at all that is vile and impure in his doings, in his sayings, in his thinkings, tracing out with self-abhorring truthfulness, how all that he is and all that he does tends to sin, he feels as if he were indeed sin-full, as if he were sin itself. He loathes himself with a most deep loathing. The whole head becomes sick, and the whole heart faint, at the sight of what he has become. He cries out with the Apostle, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the

body of this death?' For to feel sin in its own utter sinfulness, to see it rightly as it really is, is the torture of all tortures and the terror of all terrors.

9. Lord, Thou knowest all my desire : and my groaning is not hid from Thee.

God and the heart alone know all that fearful struggle, that intense longing to escape from sin and from ourselves, and to gain some better resting-place, some less poor and treacherous stay. The groans of him who hates his sin, and is yearning for forgiveness, are never lost nor hidden; they may be wrung from a feeble and a broken heart, but they are the very promptings, and even the echoes, of that Eternal Spirit, Which 'Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

10. My heart panteth, my strength hath failed me : and the sight of mine eyes is gone from me.

He sees then how near sin is to death, and then, too, most when death comes near to him. The shadow of the second death falls over him. His heart throbs but feebly, his strength becomes powerless, like that of a dying man, and the things of life grow dim and small before his dying eyes. The death of the soul is the withdrawal of grace, even as the death of the body is the failing of the breath.

11. My lovers and my neighbours did stand looking upon my trouble : and my kinsmen stood afar off.

12. They also that sought after my life laid snares for me : and they that went about to do me evil talked of wickedness, and imagined deceit all the day long.

In that foretaste of the wrath to come human help and sympathy avail nothing. He that has sinned by himself must suffer by himself. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness,' and neither neighbour nor kinsman can come near with comfort or with cure. We must die alone, and man's kindness or love cannot save us from death ; so we must repent alone, and man's companionship or pity cannot save us from the grasp of sin ; for that they are sinners too. But though friends are then unable to give aid, our enemies, both seen and unseen, become stronger and fiercer. As the sinner faints, they double their attacks ; as he despairs, they multiply their snares. Sin, whom he has served, gives him no respite, for that it is loath to lose a slave over whom it has long had power.

13. As for me, I was like a deaf man, and heard not : and as one that is dumb, who doth not open his mouth.

14. I became even as a man that heareth not : and in whose mouth are no reproofs.

What are charges of wickedness and rebukes for sin to him before whom has been revealed his own guilty state? He hears them not. He knows far more against himself than any reproach that an

enemy can bring against him, or than any rebuke that a friend may give. He is, he feels in the very depths of his being, without plea, without defence, self-condemned. He cares not to hear, for he knows it too well; he cares not to justify himself, for his sins are viler in his own eyes even than in the eyes of others. He must suffer and be quiet. He who is so guilty may surely well endure in silence, when the Sinless endured for him and opened not His mouth.

15. For in Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust : Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God.

He cannot answer for himself: but shall there be no answer? That agony in the deathliness of sin, wrestled with alone and in silence, is not given to him for nothing. At last, in the very depth of the gloom he finds his foot upon the rock. Another shall answer for him. The Lord only, Whom he had distrusted, he feels at length, can be mightier than his own evil nature; God only can set right that which he has for all the time past been setting wrong. He will trust in Him to do it; he will trust in Him to answer for him—this is the lesson his depth of woe-fulness and his silence have taught; and though it has come in misery and bitterness, its end is trust and comfort.

16. I have required that they, even mine enemies, should not triumph over me : for when my foot slipped, they rejoiced greatly against me.

Then can the soul pray for comfort, which it could not do before. It may ask now of the Saviour it has found, that its enemies triumph not over it again, that though it may still totter in its feebleness, it may not fall so as never to arise, so as to give joy to the enemies of God.

17. And I, truly, am set in the plague : and my heaviness is ever in my sight.

Heb. I am ready to fall down ;
And my pain is before me continually.

18. For I will confess my wickedness : and be sorry for my sin.

The more we long for mercy, the viler our sins appear ; and it is not until we have been freely pardoned that we know fully how deadly and vile sin is. The more it comes into the light, the blacker it shews, the deeper we are cut by the sight of it ; until at last, in the brightness of God's holiness and the clearness of His pardoning love, the whole foulness of our sinful life stands out before us in one dark and startling view. Then do we feel astonished and ready to fall ; but that pain is from grace, which probes our wounds, and not from sin, which causes them. We no longer hide from God or from ourselves the misery we have brought upon ourselves ; we open our wounds to the great Physician, our wickedness to the Giver of salvation, in sorrow but yet in trust that He may say, Go in peace.

19. But mine enemies live, and are mighty :

and they that hate me wrongfully are many in number.

20. They also that reward evil for good are against me : because I follow the thing that good is.

But repentance, however deep, brings not peace at once. We have many and mighty enemies, not only of flesh and blood, but unseen authors of spiritual wickedness, who are enraged to see the captive freed, and to find one, who once followed evil under their will, now following good under another master. They gnash their teeth in hatred and rage each time a sinner leaves off his sin, and turns to ‘walk humbly with his God.’

21. Forsake me not, O Lord my God : be not Thou far from me.

22. Haste Thee to help me : O Lord God of my salvation.

God forsakes not them who forsake sin : He draws nigh to them that draw nigh to Him ; He makes haste to help them who distrust their own weakness : He gives salvation—yea, rather He is salvation—to them who repent and pray. Let then the forgiven penitent ever dwell in His presence,—live before His face,—wait continually for His loving look and pardoning word ; and he shall know that his ‘sickness has not been unto death.’

This Psalm, which is the third Penitential Psalm, is entitled, like Psalm lxx., “A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance ;” *that is*, both to bring his sin to his own remembrance, and to bring

his suffering and sorrow to remembrance before God. For when God seems to have forgotten us, then must we remember Him. Its deep confession of unworthiness and guilt shew how utterly David had repented of his crying sins of murder and adultery, "what indignation and what revenge" the remembrance of them wrought in him against himself. It is fitly appointed for the First Day of Lent. With verses 3—10 it is worth while for the Christian reader to compare the following passage from a parable of the heathen philosopher, Socrates, of the trial of the dead, contained in the *Gorgias* of Plato:—"When therefore they come before the Judge, he, making them stand before him, examines each one's soul, not knowing whose soul it is, but often meeting with the soul of some great king; and he sees nothing sound in the soul, but finds it scarred all over with scourges and full of sores, through falsehoods and unrighteousnesses, which the evil actions of each one have imprinted on his soul. He finds it all wried through lying and pride, and nothing upright, because it has been brought up without truth; he sees too the soul full of uncomeliness and baseness, through power, luxury, wantonness, and self-indulgence. On seeing it thus he straightway sends it with disgrace to prison,—where arriving, it suffers the punishment it deserves."

FOR THE BURIAL SERVICE.

PSALM xxxix. *Dixi, custodiam.*

1. I SAID, I will take heed to my ways : that I offend not in my tongue.

2. I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle : while the ungodly is in my sight.

3. I held my tongue, and spake nothing : I kept silence, yea, even from good words ; but it was pain and grief to me.

There is no thought that comes more cheerlessly to the natural soul of man than the thought of death. The thought of leaving the things among which we have lived, and which we have grown used to, and of

going into another land of which we have known nothing, and have seen nothing, must ever fill us with deep and mournful feelings. ‘O Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, to the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things!’ We think of death, as timid children think of going into the dark. The remembrance of the grave, and still more the sight of the grave, chills us in our enjoyments, and dulls our earnestness and hopefulness in our plannings. It seems to warn us of the vanities we are, and the vanities we desire. It seems to swallow up trial and temptation, and trouble, and even sin, in its own darkness and awfulness. It shuts the mouth, and makes us say nothing. We care not to justify ourselves, or to speak either bad or good, with that chilling gloom abiding on the soul. What need to be angry even with the wicked, what need of speaking even good words, with the prospect of that silence full before us? Very heavy with mournfulness and pain is the oppression of that feeling, as it settles down upon the soul.

4. My heart was hot within me, and while I was thus musing the fire kindled : and at the last I spake with my tongue ;

But dark and cold as is death, there is that within man which is not subject to its power ; which even in the natural man cannot but rebel against its influence. Fear and despondency would teach us not to speak ; but there is a fire within

the soul which He placed there Who made the soul, and in its power the dull and heavy spirit, like metal placed within the furnace, glows, and melts, and burns. The spirit ceases to be dark, the tongue is no longer cold, and both kindle together and rise to Him Who is the very Life, Who in the beginning breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and made man to be a living soul.

5. Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days : that I may be certified how long I have to live.

6. Behold, Thou hast made my days as it were a span long : and mine age is even as nothing in respect of Thee ; and verily every man living is altogether vanity.

The soul cries to God with an almost passionate appealing,—What and where am I? Whither am I going? I see death; I am compelled to believe in death. Oh let me know, is death the end? My life here is but very short,—is this life all that I have to live? There is darkness behind and darkness before, and this mortal life is but a little space between. By the side of the ages in which God works out His doings, and by the side of the eternity which He is, and in which He is, my term of days shews like nothing, it is lost as if it were not. Is then the preaching true, ‘Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?’ Can God have made man for nothing? Is every one of the beings whom He has created and endued with life, whom He has

both blessed and chastened, altogether and utterly nothingness, and made in vain?

7. For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain : he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.

It is man's sin that he will look upon himself as made in vain, when the Almighty Father made him not in vain. He takes up with the empty shows of earth, he walks among the shadows of the world, he is careful and anxious, and takes thought about them. He sets himself to get money, to store up wealth, as if that was a reality and a truth ; and when he has disquieted himself to gain it, he goes to the grave and leaves it, and his eye cannot see who takes what he has gained, his ear cannot hear how that is scattered which he with toil had heaped together.

8. And now, Lord, what is my hope : truly my hope is even in Thee.

9. Deliver me from all mine offences : and make me not a rebuke unto the foolish.

This surely could not be the end which He, Who doeth all things well, devised for man,—to have trust in a shadow, to fix his hope upon riches. If in this life only man had hope, he were of all creatures most miserable ; and when in this life only he has hope, then is he of all creatures most miserable. His hope is in God. He may well trust and be confident that He Who made him, made him not for destruc-

tion, but for Himself and for His glory. Therefore his prayer must ever be that the object of his Maker may be accomplished in him, and that he may be delivered from all those things which mar his Maker's work, and render His purpose vain and void, so that the foolish cannot discern it—even his own offences and self-deceivings.

10. I became dumb, and opened not my mouth : for it was Thy doing.

11. Take Thy plague away from me : I am even consumed by the means of Thy heavy hand.

It is man's vain self-disquietings and his offences that make his days seem hopeless and helpless. It is the heaping up riches that makes death terrible. It is man himself who makes his life a dream, because he will live among the shadows and forget the realities ; he will fix his hope in the things that pass and fade, and will doubt the things which alone endure. 'Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live,' and he himself makes himself 'full of misery.' Therefore he who dreads the grave has nothing to say before God ; his mouth is closed ; the shortness of his life is of God's doing, but the emptiness of it is his own. Our affliction or our fear is not a doom which we cannot shun, it is a chastisement bestowed upon us for wrong-doing by a righteous God. He may lay His hand heavily upon us, but it is not more heavily than we need ; it is not so heavy as our sins ; and however heavily

it be laid, by bringing death near to us, it is so laid to draw us unto Him Who willeth not our death, and not to thrust us from Him.

12. When Thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, Thou makest his beauty to consume away, like as it were a moth fretting a garment : every man therefore is but vanity.

He rebukes men with fear, He chastens them with death, for their sin, and for that only. It is sin that ruins the soul, that causes the death of the body. It is sin that eats away and mars innocence and holiness, like a moth frets a garment, and makes it valueless. He that sinneth therefore—he that lays up riches where moth and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal—is working vanity, and is but vanity. It is not the living soul that God made man that is vanity, but the sinful and degraded thing that man has made himself.

13. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with Thine ears consider my calling : hold not Thy peace at my tears.

14. For I am a stranger with Thee : and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

Our time, then, is short, but our hope is eternal. If our days be few, let our prayers be many. Life indeed is even as nothing, but grace is more than *everything*. It may be that ‘in the midst of life we

are in death,' but therefore let us 'seek for succour' from none else but that 'Lord Who for our sins is justly displeased.' The tears of penitence can drown sin, even as the fire of faith can conquer death; and for them that truly sorrow for their misdoings, there is one Who saith, 'Weep not,' as He said to the mother who wept over her dead child at Nain. We all have to die; we are no better than our fathers; we must say with Abraham, 'a stranger and a sojourner am I with you; give me a possession of a burying-place:' yet may we know, with Abraham, that we are strangers here because we are citizens of another country. 'For they that say such things declare plainly that they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.'

15. O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength : before I go hence, and be no more seen.

To Him then, in the day of weakness and in the fear of death, let us most humbly turn, beseeching Him for others and for ourselves, that He would 'give us unfeigned repentance for all the errors of our life past, and steadfast faith in His Son Jesus; that our sins may be done away by His mercy, and our pardon sealed in heaven, before we go hence, and be no more seen.' So may we trust that we shall be heard again when we pray 'that we, with all those that are departed in the true

faith of His holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in His eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

This Psalm is inscribed by David "to the chief musician Jeduthun." Jeduthun, or Jeditun, is mentioned as one of the leaders of sacred music in 1 Chron. xvi. 41 ; 2 Chron. v. 12. His children were porters at the gates of the temple. The Psalm is an enlargement of David's confession (1 Chron. xxix. 15), when he blessed the Lord before all the congregation before he died. It is a meditation upon the frailty of man and the uncertainty of his condition in this world, leading the thoughts, under the guidance of the Spirit, from man's misery and shortness of life to God, Who is our hope, and His everlasting mercy. It is most fitly placed by the Church in the Office for the Burial of the Dead.

FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

PSALM xl. *Expectans expectavi.*

1. I WAITED patiently for the Lord : and He inclined unto me, and heard my calling.

2. He brought me also out of the horrible pit, out of the mire and clay : and set my feet upon the rock, and ordered my goings.

Man had long been waiting for Him Who was to redeem mankind. The promise had been made, that our nature should again be raised from the depth to which it had fallen, but the fulfilling of it was delayed. Through the long years of violence before the deluge, through the sojourning in Canaan and the affliction in Egypt, through the wanderings in the wilderness, through the teachings of the first law, through the types of sacrifices, through the

warnings of prophets, through captivity and deliverance, through dim-seen light and utter blindness, had the children of men been waiting, until their Saviour came;—waiting, a nation for their king, a Church for their priest, yea, worshippers for their God. Man was calling to God throughout that long waiting-time ever and anon; at one time, with the prayer of living faith expecting His answer, but more often with the dumb longing of misery and want. At length, ‘in the fulness of the time,’ He heard and answered. He brought up our fallen souls from the depth of misery in which they lay, from the darkness, and confusion, and woe, into which they had cast themselves. He raised them from the clay of earth and the mire of sin, to be no more ‘of the earth, earthy,’ and set their hopes and wishes upon a sure resting-place, upon ‘that rock which is Christ.’ He opened to them the way unto Himself, and bade them walk therein.

3. And He hath put a new song in my mouth : even a thanksgiving unto our God.

4. Many shall see it, and fear : and shall put their trust in the Lord.

Then did man’s heart and mouth learn a new office—the work of thanksgiving. Before he had cried for mercy, now was he taught to render thanks for grace. God’s love was revealed most freely, fully, perfectly; and man’s waiting was far more than over-paid. All Adam’s seed should see it, for grace was to prevail further even than sin; and holy fear


and loving faith was to be man's return for the redemption which had been wrought for him.

5. Blessed is the man that hath set his hope in the Lord : and turned not unto the proud, and to such as go about with lies.

6. O Lord my God, great are the wondrous works which Thou hast done, like as be also Thy thoughts which are to us-ward : and yet there is no man that ordereth them unto Thee.

7. If I should declare them, and speak of them : they should be more than I am able to express.

Cursed is he who trusteth in man, and blessed is he who trusteth in God. They who, from the horrible pit of their misery and sin, look to the creature to deliver them, shall find themselves sinking deeper in their despair. Their trust, which is placed upon a lie, shall perish with themselves. Our own pride and our own plans are falsehoods that cannot help ; it is the wonderful love of God, and His most marvellous scheme of grace, that only can be our deliverance. Wondrous works indeed hath He done Who hath been among us, and with us, and in us, and one with us. Wondrous works, which man could not contrive, for he could not conceive them ; which came only from infinite love, and were devised by infinite wisdom : 'For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?' The wonderfulness of our redemption in God made man



is beyond all words and beyond all thought. 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.'

8. Sacrifice, and meat-offering, Thou wouldst not : but mine ears hast Thou opened.

Heb. Ears hast Thou dug through to me.

LXX. But a body hast Thou prepared me [and Heb. x. 5.]

9. Burnt-offerings, and sacrifice for sin, hast Thou not required : then said I, Lo, I come,

10. In the volume of the book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy will, O My God : I am content to do it ; yea, Thy law is within My heart.

The law was but a shadow of the wondrous things of God ; and its sacrifices which were offered year by year continually could never make the comers thereunto perfect. 'For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, 'Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Thy will, O God.' It was not death, but obedience, that God willed to have. The blood of calves or goats could not sanctify the conscience. Therefore the Son of God undertook to offer the sacrifice which man could not offer, the sacrifice of perfect obedience to the will of His Father, the sacrifice of Himself. 'God provided

Himself a Lamb,' when He Who was equal with God took upon Him the form of a servant, and shewed Himself willing to be obedient even unto death. He Who was a Son was content to take our flesh and our nature, even the nature of servants, that He might perfectly fulfil His Father's perfect will, not in the letter only, but in the spirit, not with the hands only, but with the heart. This was what the law required; this was what the prophets had foretold should be; this was what the eternal decrees of the Almighty had purposed from everlasting should be done. 'Above, when He said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings and offering for sin, Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.'

11. I have declared Thy righteousness in the great congregation : lo, I will not refrain my lips, O Lord, and that Thou knowest.

12. I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart : my talk hath been of Thy truth, and of Thy salvation.

13. I have not kept back Thy loving mercy and truth : from the great congregation.

He Who was the Priest of His Church was their Prophet too. He declared by His parables, His prophecies, His teachings, that way of righteousness

which leads to God. He did not hide the things of truth and salvation; He taught them daily; He preached the Gospel in authority and in unweariedness; words of grace and truth were ever proceeding from His mouth. 'He spake openly to the world; He ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted, and in secret He said nothing.' But still more by His life than by His lips did He declare the righteousness of God. His baptism, fasting, and temptation, His agony, and cross, and death; spoke of old and still speak unto the end of time, of Him Who fulfilled the Father's will, and purchased to Him an universal Church. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away; but His words shall not pass away.'

14. Withdraw not Thou Thy mercy from me, O Lord : let Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth alway preserve me.


15. For innumerable troubles are come about me; my sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up : yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me.

He Who taught His Church to pray, prayed Himself. He bore our nature, and in man He prayed for man; for in praying for Himself He prayed for them also that were His. He became as one of them who need mercy, that He might ask for abiding mercy for them that need; and that through Him the loving-kindness and truth of God might

preserve them that apart from Him would perish. And He bore not only our nature, but our sorrows, and not only our sorrows, but our sins. He was innocent, and yet was He sorrowful; He had done no sin at any time, yet was He 'sore amazed and very heavy' when the sight of our sins came before Him, and the burden of our guilt was laid upon His sinless head. Who can enter into the mystery of that agony in Gethsemane, when there came around Him and before Him, like a hideous cloud, all sins done or to be done by man, all foul, vile, miserable deeds, in their naked foulness, vileness, and misery. He Who was very love was bearing the guilt of all cruelty, and tyranny, and selfishness; He Who was very purity was bearing all lust, and shame, and recklessness; He Who was very meekness, all anger, pride, and malice; He Who was very holiness, all unbelief, and blasphemy, and lies. None but He could number them, and yet alone He bore them all; but His sweat was as blood, and He fell on His face in the agony of entreaty beneath their terrible oppression. Only the infinite love of God could struggle with the infinite sin of man; and in that struggle the soul of Him Who was infinite love was 'exceeding sorrowful even unto death.'

16. O Lord, let it be Thy pleasure to deliver me : make haste, O Lord, to help me.

17. Let them be ashamed, and confounded together, that seek after my soul to destroy it :



let them be driven backward, and put to rebuke, that wish me evil.

18. Let them be desolate, and rewarded with shame : that say unto me, Fie upon thee, fie upon thee.

As He prayed for His Church, so must His Church pray with Him. Day by day should our petition come before Him Who heareth prayer,—‘O God, make speed to save us ! O Lord, make haste to help us !’ and in the power of that prayer shall our enemies, who are also His, be driven away, and the destroyer of souls be rebuked and baffled. ‘As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.’ They who deride and despise him who trusts in God for deliverance shall have shame and desolation for their reward.

19. Let all those that seek Thee be joyful and glad in Thee : and let such as love Thy salvation say alway, The Lord be praised.

‘Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My Name,’ the Lord said to the apostles : ‘ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.’ For Jesus’ sorrow was made our joy ; His agony was made our victory ; His death was our salvation. The depth of His anguish revealed to us the mightiness of His love to man. The cross is the ensign of His glory, for that it is the token of His mercy ; and unending praise and honour is most justly due to Him Who hung thereon, from us who are saved thereby. Praise we

Him for His love on Calvary, and we shall praise Him for His majesty in the new Jerusalem.

20. As for me, I am poor and needy : but the Lord careth for me.

21. Thou art my helper and redeemer : make no long tarrying, O my God.

He Who now reigns was once as we are, poor and needy. ‘He had not where to lay His head,’ yet was He ever the Beloved of the Father. There are none truly poor but they who have not Christ, there are none truly needy but they who lack His grace. Let the poor and the sorrowing be ever sure that the Lord careth for them, Who is an Almighty Helper and most compassionate Redeemer; and knowing this, let them wait patiently for His redemption. Their waiting will not be long: to the apostle who tarried the longest He said at last, ‘Surely I come quickly. Amen.’ Oh! keep we our eyes fixed with loving longing upon the home where our Lord is tarrying; and may our soul and being say in answer to His voice, ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus.’

This Psalm of David, which is appointed by the Church for Good Friday, is shewn by the words of Hebrews x. 5—9 to be prophetic of the Saviour. In verse 8 the original reads, “Mine ears hast Thou opened,” with a manifest reference,—such as is also found in Isa. v. 5, “The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back,”—to that particular command of the Mosaic Law which ordained that liberty should be given to every slave in the seventh year of his servitude, and the command to the master that if at the end of that time the servant should say unto him, “I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine

house, because he is well with thee; then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever," (Deut. xv. 16, 17). This the LXX. and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews render, "a body hast Thou prepared Me;" possibly by some slight change in the reading, but more probably in reference to that human body, "the form of a servant," which the Redeemer took upon Himself. He, through love to the house of God, though He was a son, determined to pay a perfect and lasting obedience to the law of God, as a servant; and therefore a body was prepared for Him, in which He might suffer and obey, even as the faithful servant endured to have his ears pierced through, in order that he might dwell always with his master. This was, as it were, a circumcision of the ear and of the heart. Though many verses are prophetic of Christ, the Fathers understand others of the members of His body: verse 15, for instance, literally is true of all who see their sins and are longing to repent, while yet prophetically it is true of Him "on Whom the Lord hath laid the iniquities of us all," (Isa. liii. 6).

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM xli. *Beatus qui intelligit.*

1. BLESSED is he that considereth the poor and needy: the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.

There must come to most a time of sickness and feebleness while they are waiting for death; and during that time our thoughts of what is real wealth and true advantage pass through a very great change. Then we see how he is the richest man who has given most; and how he is the poorest who has laid up most for himself. In that time of trouble, they only can look to the infinite mercy of God, who after their own finite power have shewn mercy to their fellow-men. Then he that hath

considered the poor and needy is indeed blessed, for there opens before him the vision of Him in Whom alone is deliverance, Who was once poor, Who still is poor in the poor members of His Church, and Who reckons ever that which is done to His poor as done unto Himself; Who shall say upon the throne of His glory, 'I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'

2. The Lord preserve him, and keep him alive, that he may be blessed upon earth : and deliver not Thou him into the will of his enemies.

3. The Lord comfort him, when he lieth sick upon his bed : make Thou all his bed in his sickness.

He that considereth the poor shall be considered himself when he is in want. He shall share in the blessing while he is still alive; for the faith which worketh by love hath promise both of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come. His prayer shall be fulfilled, and he shall be 'delivered from evil' even when trouble seems nearest to him. Christ Himself, the eternal Consoler, will console him; and in Him, when he is weak and in sickness, shall he be strong, and on the bed of death, shall he be nearest unto life. There will be One by his pillow Who knows his trials and has borne his sickness; and His absolving presence shall drive

away the enemies of his soul. He Who bade the palsied man to arise, and take up his bed, and walk, will speak to the stricken and feeble spirit in the same words of power and love.

4. I said, Lord, be merciful unto me : heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.

5. Mine enemies speak evil of me : When shall he die, and his name perish ?

6. And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity : and his heart conceiveth falsehood within himself, and when he cometh forth he telleth it.

Thus did David suffer distress and anguish of mind in the weakness and infirmity which came upon him when he 'was old and stricken in years.' Not only did his sins come back to his recollection, and force him to crave again and again for mercy to that Great Physician Who only can heal the wounded soul, but other troubles which arose from his sins came fresh upon him. Adonijah, his own son, whom he had never displeased, was conspiring against him, and plotting with his former friends and servants to obtain his kingdom. All those who had conspired against him must have been most anxious and impatient for his death, that they might carry out their plans. Their visits of pretended friendliness were but to watch how near he was to death ; and their words of mock kindness and sympathy no doubt, on their departure from his presence, they would exchange for messages of exultation at his

hopeless state : the knowledge of this must have cut the dying king to the heart, and made him cry for mercy to that God Who had thus brought his sin to his remembrance.

7. All mine enemies whisper together against me : even against me do they imagine this evil.

8. Let the sentence of guiltiness proceed against him : and now that he lieth, let him rise up no more.

Aye, and a greater than David hath suffered the same. Against Him, Who, though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, 'the chief Priests and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles;' and one of them, Caiaphas the High-Priest, 'said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.' And 'from that day forth they took counsel together to put Him to death.'

9. Yea, even mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted : who did also eat of my bread, hath laid great wait for me.

Heb. Also the man of my peace, whom I trusted,
Who also eats of my bread,
Lifts his heel against me.

LXX. Hath magnified his treachery over me.

The treachery of Adonijah, of Abiathar, and of Joab must indeed have deeply wounded David. But that which was done to him was a type of that which was to be done to his Lord. 'Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil,' was the sorrowing rebuke of Him Who had loved them, and fed them with angels' food. Judas Iscariot, who 'was numbered with the apostles, and had obtained part of their ministry,' who knew the places where his Lord was wont to resort for prayer, to whom He gave powers and opened parables, who ate with Him at His table at His last supper, he 'communed with the Chief Priests and Captains how he might betray Him unto them, and they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.' He led the enemies of Christ to take Him in the garden; and that he might be a traitor to the uttermost he 'had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him, and saith, Master, Master; and kissed Him.' And this was so done 'that the Scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me.'

10. But be Thou merciful unto me, O Lord : raise Thou me up again, and I shall reward them.

11. By this I know Thou favourest me :

that mine enemy doth not triumph against me.

They who trust in the mercy of God, even in weakness and poverty, shall yet escape the devices of those who would injure them. They who 'forsake their own mercy' are their own enemies. The plottings of Adonijah came to nothing, and only brought at last death to himself and to his companions in rebellion. The counsels of the Pharisees against Christ were really counsels against themselves. He died indeed by their malice, but He rose again ; while they who slew Him to save their place and nation, by that very deed lost their place and destroyed their nation. The tree of the Church is planted where the thorns of the synagogue are rooted up. And the triumph of Judas in his treachery was but for a moment, for 'when he saw that He was condemned, he repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the Chief Priests and Elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us ? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.'

12. And when I am in my health, Thou upholdest me : and shalt set me before Thy face for ever.

In sickness and in health, in weakness and in

strength, in life and in death, in this world and in that which is to come, we have but one upholder, even the Lord, Who hath gone before us in all that we have to pass through. He hath gone up and entered into the glory of God; and we, following Him here in mercy and in charity, shall follow Him hereafter where He, Who for a time has made us weak, shall make us strong for ever.

13. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel : world without end. Amen.

To Him Who hath given to His Church not only the instruction of the Law and the warnings of Prophets, but also the holy melody of Psalms—to Him Who is the God of the true Israel in whom the promises made to Abraham are accomplished—to Him Whose name I AM by which the fathers knew Him, is expanded in the Christian Church into the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—to Him be ascribed for His manifold gifts to man, all blessing and praise in time and in eternity. Amen.

The language of this Psalm would lead us to refer its writing to that period of David's life when he was old and infirm, and Adonijah his son conspired with Joab and Abiathar to get possession of his kingdom, (1 Kings i. 1, 5, 6, 7). Their plot was however defeated, and according to David's determination, Solomon was proclaimed king and made his successor. We find, when the king's servants came to bless David and Solomon, that "the king bowed himself upon the bed." (47). Verse 9 has, however, a distinct prophetic reference to Judas the traitor among the apostles, and the very words of

the Hebrew, "the man of my peace, or of my salutation," in themselves recall him who made the salutation of a friend the signal of his perfidy, and pointed Him out to His enemies by the words, "Hail Rabbi," and by a kiss. Our blessed Lord Himself applies the words of David to the false apostle, (St. John xiii. 18). The last verse is not any portion of the Psalm, but is an ascription of glory to God, making the close of the first book or division of the Psalms. The second book begins with the succeeding Psalm.

THE SECOND DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

PSALMS XLII.—LXXII.

IN this book are contained the Psalms from the forty-second to the seventy-second; and it is closed by the doxology:—

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,
Which only doeth wondrous things;
And blessed be the name of His Majesty for ever:
And let the whole earth be filled with His Majesty.
Amen, and Amen.

The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

The Psalms of this book, as well as those of the third book, were in all likelihood collected by King Hezekiah, during that great revival of religious feeling which marked his reign. He seems to have made a search after those parts of the writings of God's prophets and psalmists which had been forgotten or neglected, and to have caused them to be copied out with care and preserved for the good of his people. The latter portion of the Book of Proverbs was thus compiled by his directions, and added to the former part; for chapter xxv. commences, 'These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.' It is very probable that Isaiah the prophet might be among these transcribers, and have the superintendence of their work. In the history of Hezekiah's restoration of the temple and its services which is

given in 2 Chronicles, ch. xxix., we find that particular attention was paid to the subject of psalms; and it can hardly be doubted that the sons of Korah were among the Levites to whom it was given in charge: 'Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.'

This second book consists of thirty Psalms, of which seven or eight are by the sons of Korah, written generally in the reign of Jehoshaphat, or during the desolation and neglect of the temple-worship under Ahaz: one is by Asaph, and the remainder are, with the exception of the last one, by David. These Psalms of David had not, it would seem, up to that time been regularly collected, or they had been forgotten during the carelessness and idolatries of the kings preceding Hezekiah, and therefore they were then first placed together in one volume, and adapted to the service of the sanctuary. Those Psalms whose titles ascribe them to David bear the marks of his spirit in their personal and fervent character; while those of the sons of Korah, except the forty-first, and those of Asaph, are more national than personal; and look to God rather as the Almighty God of the world and the ruler of the Jewish people, than as the personal Lord of the individual soul which prayed before Him. They appear written rather for public worship than for private devotion.

THE SECOND DIVISION.

PSALM xlii. *Quemadmodum.*

1. LIKE as the hart desireth the water-brooks : so longeth my soul after Thee, O God.

2. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God : when shall I come to appear before the presence of God ?

Like the hart in the drought of summer pants with the heat, and hastens swiftly through the burning desert to the valleys, where there are brooks of water flowing, that it may quench its thirst with drinking, and may bathe and cool its weary limbs, so does the loving soul long and call and hasten unto Him Who is the Fount of love. In the wilderness of this mortal life, while the spirit is away from grace and from the Giver of grace, it thirsts and wearies for Him Who is its life and stay, for Him Whose are the living waters of Holy Baptism, and the refreshing cup of Holy Communion. Even as the hart scents the spring in the burned-up plains, so do they who love Him hear His call of love, 'Come unto Me,' and their whole soul turns with longing eagerness to come whither He calls it, to 'depart and to be with Christ, which is far better' than to travail here.

3. My tears have been my meat day and night : while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God ?

There are tears of bright love, as well as tears of dark penitence : love and sorrow may well weep together in them whose sins are pardoned. There are inward tears, giving inward refreshment. A single sigh for holiness and faith, will strengthen the life of grace within the soul more than meat will stay the weary body. But they who make their tears their food will but thirst the more for those living waters beside which all tears shall be wiped from all faces. This the world understands not in anywise ; it knows not Christ, how then can it know the love of Christ ? Holy love is ever to it a marvel and a mystery ; and it knows not what or where that Lord can be Whose love alone can fill the longing soul.

4. Now when I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself : for I went with the multitude, and brought them forth into the House of God ;

5. In the voice of praise and thanksgiving : among such as keep holy-day.

Heb. On these things I think,

And I pour out my desire by myself—

When shall I pass over with the throng ?

When shall I lead them in procession to the House
of God,

With the voice of joy and praise,

The multitude keeping the holiday ?

But they who love Christ love all that pertains to

Him ; above all do they love the House in which they meet Him among His people, and the days on which they find Him there. The gathering with the multitude of the faithful is a foreshadowing of the multitude which none can number : the going forth to the House of God is a type to the thoughts of faith of the ascending to the unearthly temple ; the songs of praise of the Church visible are echoes from the Church invisible ; the holy days we keep on earth are foretastes of that heavenly festival which hath neither opening nor close.

6. Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul : and why art thou so disquieted within me ?

7. Put thy trust in God : for I will yet give Him thanks for the help of His countenance.

It is strange that the gift of present grace and the hope of glory should not suffice for peace ; but the temptations of earth and the unceasing sinkings even of the believing mar their confidence and disquiet the soul. We are not yet with Christ ; He consoles us in our heaviness, and frees us from our disquietings ; we learn that we may safely trust in Him ; He gives us glimpses of His presence, filling us with thankfulness ; but the fulness of joy which none can move and peace which none can trouble, can only be when we are entered into the presence of His glory.

8. My God, my soul is vexed within me : therefore will I remember Thee concerning the land of Jordan, and the little hill of Hermon.

Heb. Therefore do I call Thee to remembrance,
From the land of Jordan and of the Hermons,
From the hill Mitzar.

Yea, in the anxiousness and disquieting which needs must come to us in this weary life, we must remember the things to come. We are pilgrims here, we shall be dwellers there. The Jordan of our earthly sojourning shall give place to the river of God in the eternal kingdom, and the hills of earth shall be exchanged for the holy mountain of our God in the heavenly and better Canaan.

9. One deep calleth another, because of the noise of the water-pipes : all Thy waves and storms are gone over me.

In the confusion and strife and sin of this our lower world there is ever one deep calling to another—the deep of our misery calling to the deep of His mercy. The waters of heaven are, as it were, contending with the floods of earth. In this life we are often overwhelmed by the billows of temptation and the storms of passion, and scarcely have these passed away when they are followed by the waves of God's judgments and the mighty outbursts of His justice.

10. The Lord hath granted His loving-kindness in the day-time : and in the night-season did I sing of Him, and made my prayer unto the God of my life.

Yet in all this restlessness and whirl of trial God is ever love. In the daytime of our prosperity we see His love, and cannot doubt it; but in the night of

trouble, though we are unable to discern His love, it still is there. By trust in Him we may rejoice in tribulations also. He is our Maker 'Who giveth songs in the night;' for even in darkness there are grounds for thankfulness. If the sun has its setting, the stars have their rising. The sun-set is their rise. He is ever ready to accept our praise, and willing to hearken to our prayers; and His love and care which each day makes us see, should, as each night passes, call forth our worship and our thanks.

11. I will say unto the God of my strength,
Why hast Thou forgotten me : why go I thus
heavily, while the enemy oppresseth me ?

12. My bones are smitten asunder as with
a sword : while mine enemies that trouble
me cast me in the teeth ;

13. Namely, while they say daily unto me :
Where is now thy God ?

The soul may be terrified and may tremble when the fountains of the great deep seem, as it were, broken up, but not until then is the ark lifted from the earth. He Who 'remembered Noah' will never forget them who have walked with Him. It may be that the distrust of His love may for a moment pierce the very soul, like a sword-blow rives the bones; that the continued suggestions of the wicked, that God's love has failed, may for a little space trouble and confound it. Yet the temptation brings with it in itself the way to escape. 'Let God deliver Him if He will have Him' was cast in the teeth of Him

Who was holier, purer, meeker than we are ; and He passed through the darkness and the sorrow and was delivered : and in Him are we delivered, and can reply to the enemies of our souls with boldness, Where and when is our God and Saviour not ?

14. Why art thou so vexed, O my soul : and why art thou so disquieted within me ?

15. O put thy trust in God : for I will yet thank Him, Which is the help of my countenance, and my God.

Why then should the soul be vexed, though troubles and doubts come round it ? The love of Him Who is love shines above them and through them and in them. The soul that is His, that is thirsting for His grace, panting to enter into His glory, longing for His presence, cannot but pass fleetly and lightly through the disquietings of earth. ‘Hope that is seen is not hope ;’ we do not yet see His glory, yet do we trust in Him to bring us unto it : but we do see His love ; that is ours even now and here. It is only our imperfection that makes us see it but imperfectly ; and when we are made perfect, then shall we see it perfectly.

The title of this Psalm, besides the usual inscription “to the chief Musician,” states it to be “a Maschil by the sons of Korah.” Maschil is, as has been said, an instruction. It may be assigned to the desolation and apostacy in the reign of Ahaz, (2 Chron. xxviii.). Korah, the grandson of Kohath the Levite, perished in his rebellion against Moses and Aaron, (Num. xvi.) ; but his children did not perish with their father, (Num. xxvi. 11). The Korhites therefore became in after time one of the great families of the tribe of Levi. Samuel the prophet was of the sons of Korah, and indeed the head of the family ;

and by his influence those schools of the prophets were first founded, in which music and the singing of Psalms, and no doubt the composing of Psalms also, were taught to those whose duty it would be to serve God, either in the tabernacle or in the prophetic offices. His mother, Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, whose song of thanksgiving is recorded in 1 Sam. ii. 1—10, was of the children of Korah. Several also of those who are called Seers in the books of Kings and Chronicles appear on enquiry into their genealogies to have been of the tribe of Levi. It was doubtless among the sons of Korah in the house of Samuel, in Naioth and in Ramah, (1 Sam. xix. 18, 20,) that David perfected himself in that practice of composing hymns to God, which gained for him the name of “the sweet singer of Israel.” This institution, by which religion was associated with melody and poetry, seems to have done much towards preserving the law from being quite forgotten after the division of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah; and in the time of Jehoshaphat, the Levites, and among them the sons of Korah, seem especially to have aided in the work of reformation, (2 Chron. xix. 8). The whole of the Psalms composed by the family of Korah were written before the captivity; for they did not return from Babylon, (Ezra ii. 40, 41).

PSALM xliii. *Judica me, Deus.*

1. GIVE sentence with me, O God, and defend my cause against the ungodly people : O deliver me from the deceitful and wicked man.

2. For Thou art the God of my strength, why hast Thou put me from Thee : and why go I so heavily, while the enemy oppresseth me ?

In this world the wicked are ever mingled with the good : and they who love God have to abide His time, until they are set free from the scorn and deceit of them who love Him not. They are under trial ; and the time seems long and their hearts grow

heavy until their trial-time is over. And a part of their trial is, that at times God seems to leave them ; and then the powers that oppress them and injure their salvation appear to increase tenfold. Thus do they learn that all that they have and are is from God ; and that, while in Him they can do all things, without Him they can do nothing and are nothing.

3. O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me : and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling.

These are but two names for one and the same thing, for what is light but truth, and what is truth but light ; and what are they both but Christ the Lord ? He came from the Father to bring us to the Father. He will lead us if we will follow Him ; and whither will He lead us but unto life ? He will bring us safely unto those many mansions of eternity of which the Church on earth is the earnest and the type.

4. And that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness : and upon the harp will I give thanks unto Thee, O God, my God.

LXX. And I will enter in unto the altar of God ;
Unto God Who maketh glad my youth.

He will bring us, if we will follow His calling, to the altar of God ; there will He accept our oblation of the frankincense of fervent prayer, and the sacrifice which we can offer, even that of a contrite heart, *and in return* He will give us the costly gift of Him-

self; and in the giving of Himself will fill us with peace and hallowed gladness. We have then the pledge of what we shall have in fulness in His own time, for they who kneel before His altar shall hereafter sit beneath His throne. Surely then the affections of our heart will vibrate to words of grateful joy, when we thus feel and know the Saviour's love; we shall repeat again and again the Name of Him Who loved us, and the oftener we repeat it the sweeter melody will it make within our souls.

5. Why art thou so heavy, O my soul : and why art thou so disquieted within me ?

6. O put thy trust in God : for I will yet give Him thanks, Which is the help of my countenance, and my God.

What heaviness or disquietude can come upon our soul thus made secure of our Redeemer's love and filled with His Eucharistic joy ? In the brightness of that hope, the overcasting clouds of doubt and dread must vanish. We may thank Him with a trusting heart, for He Who has given thus much will most surely give us all. He will give Himself to us, for that He has already given Himself to us. He will give Himself in His immortality to us then immortal, even because He gave Himself in His mortality to us when mortal.

This Psalm has no title in the Hebrew, and therefore has been sometimes supposed to have once formed a portion of the preceding one. It was undoubtedly written by the same writer as the forty-second; and three of the verses are repeated almost word for word from it. It may be assigned to the reign of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxix., xxx.) It should be mentioned, however, that the LXX. assign it to *David*.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM xliv. *Deus, auribus.*

1. WE have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us : what Thou hast done in their time of old ;

2. How Thou hast driven out the heathen with Thy hand, and planted them in : how Thou hast destroyed the nations, and cast them out.

‘ O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, [the noble works that Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them.] The love and power of God are things of experience ; if any in the Church now have not sufficient faith to bear witness to them and to rest securely upon them, the Church in times past had. We have heard of, though we cannot through our weakness see, the work of Christ in the world. Our fathers in the faith can tell us, as the Israelite fathers of old taught their children, of the deliverance from Egypt and the entering into Canaan, how the heathen have been driven out from their strongholds by the faith of God, and the Church has been built in their room ; how idolatries, and slaveries, and trustings in lies have been destroyed in the light of truth, and cast out before the armies of the Captain of our salvation.

3. *For they gat not the land in possession*

through their own sword : neither was it their own arm that helped them ;

4. But Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance : because Thou hadst a favour unto them.

The promise stands as sure to the Christian Church, and to Christ her Lord, as to the Israelites under Joshua their captain :—‘ Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.’ And yet it is not her strength, nor her wisdom, nor her power that takes the world as a possession for the Lord, but the mighty though not carnal weapons with which her God has armed her. ‘ The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,’ is her sword. It is the right hand of God, and He Who is on His right hand, the sending forth of His grace, and His electing love, that bring the nations into that kingdom which is not of this world.

5. Thou art my King, O God : send help unto Jacob.

6. Through Thee will we overthrow our enemies : and in Thy Name will we tread them under, that rise up against us.

They who own God for their King, and Christ for their Saviour, as ‘ His faithful soldiers and servants,’ the true Israel, ever do, may ever ask for His assisting grace to overthrow that which is evil, to ‘ mortify and kill all vices’ in themselves, and cast down unbelief and doubtings in others ; and through Jesus

Christ their Saviour they shall receive more than what they ask, even to the trampling down the powers of darkness beneath their feet.

7. For I will not trust in my bow : it is not my sword that shall help me ;

8. But it is Thou that savest us from our enemies : and puttest them to confusion that hate us.

9. We make our boast of God all day long : and will praise Thy Name for ever.

Joshua, the leader of Israel, bade the Israelites remember that the kings of the Amorites were driven out before them, ‘but not with their sword, nor with their bow.’ And in like manner all things teach us that it is not in ourselves that we can trust, but in Him Who saveth us. The Church has no strength of her own,—her strength must ever be that of her Leader and Lord. To glory in ourselves is utterly false and vain: ‘He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.’ All grace must be ascribed to Him here, and then shall be ascribed all glory to Him in eternity.

10. But now Thou art far off, and puttest us to confusion : and goest not forth with our armies.

11. Thou makest us to turn our backs upon our enemies : so that they which hate us spoil *our goods*.

Him; above all do they love the House in which they meet Him among His people, and the days on which they find Him there. The gathering with the multitude of the faithful is a foreshadowing of the multitude which none can number: the going forth to the House of God is a type to the thoughts of faith of the ascending to the unearthly temple; the songs of praise of the Church visible are echoes from the Church invisible; the holy days we keep on earth are foretastes of that heavenly festival which hath neither opening nor close.

6. Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul : and why art thou so disquieted within me ?

7. Put thy trust in God : for I will yet give Him thanks for the help of His countenance.

It is strange that the gift of present grace and the hope of glory should not suffice for peace; but the temptations of earth and the unceasing sinkings even of the believing mar their confidence and disquiet the soul. We are not yet with Christ; He consoles us in our heaviness, He saves us from our disquietings; we learn that we must wholly trust in Him; He gives us glimpses of His glory, filling us with thankfulness; but we cannot see His glory within me, concerning the Hermon.

loved best, and who loved Him best, suffered, in their degree, as He suffered. The cross was laid upon them, and they were 'compelled' to bear it. The apostle St. Paul, who was chosen and called to the work of the Church by the Lord of the Church Himself, sets out in no doubtful words the things which the rulers of the Church endured in their ministry. He declares that they were but like slaves, too vile to be sold, and only used to be exposed like malefactors, to be killed by wild beasts as a sight and amusement for the people. 'For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed unto death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men.' Being weak and despised, 'even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are as the offscouring of all things unto this day.'

18. And though all this be come upon us, yet do we not forget Thee : nor behave ourselves frowardly in Thy covenant.

19. Our heart is not turned back : neither our steps gone out of Thy way ;

20. No, not when Thou hast smitten us into the place of dragons : and covered us with the shadow of death.

Heb. Although Thou hast crushed us into the abode of jackals.

In persecution, in sorrow, in bondage, the Church loses not grace ; rather in her trials does she gain that in which she was wanting before,—patience, earnestness, faith. Grievous though it is to bear the cross, yet the bearing it works not loss, but gain. The very touch will hinder the believer from forgetting God, and few, while they are under it, behave forwardly in His covenant. It is not then that the heart turns back ; it is less then, than in the time of ease and softness, that the steps of His chosen ones go out of His narrow way. He, the Christ, was alone with the wild beasts in His temptation, and they who will be as He is, and will conquer as He conquered, must be ready in faith to ‘wander in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.’ They must be content to have the shadow of death near them and over them, if they would have within them the light of life eternal.

21. If we have forgotten the Name of our God, and holden up our hands to any strange god : shall not God search it out ? for He knoweth the very secrets of the heart.

22. For Thy sake also are we killed all the day long : and are counted as sheep appointed to be slain.

Trial searches those who fail in faith and love ; but trial makes love strong. It reveals the hearts of saints both to God and to themselves. They may seem to be as sheep for the shambles, not for the altar ; but it is not so. The sacrifice of their suffer-

ings is to the glory both of their Lord and of themselves. They only who have suffered can join in the triumphal cry—‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay! in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

23. Up, Lord, why sleepest Thou : awake, and be not absent from us for ever.

24. Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face : and forgettest our misery and trouble?

25. For our soul is brought low, even unto the dust : our belly cleaveth unto the ground.

26. Arise, and help us : and deliver us for Thy mercy’s sake.

God may seem to forget His people in their trial, but He is regarding them all the while. ‘He despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful;’ and therefore we may cry to Him ‘mercifully to assist our prayers that we make before Him in all our troubles and adversities, whensoever they oppress us;’ and to grant that ‘His servants, being hurt by no per-

secutions, may evermore give thanks unto Him in His holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Well may we respond to this the Church's humble prayer,—‘O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for Thy Name's sake.’

This Psalm is “a Maschil by the sons of Korah for the chief Musician.” It may well be assigned to the time of the invasion of Judæa by Sennacherib the king of Assyria, when Hezekiah and his people were in expectation of Jerusalem being taken, and the nation being destroyed, (2 Kings xviii. 19). The Psalm breathes a sorrowful tone of prayer to God for deliverance, not doubting, yet not confident. Verses 18 and 21 would refer to that restoration of true religion which had been brought about in Hezekiah's reign; and there are several expressions in this Psalm, as in verses 15, 22, which recall similar words in the prophecies of Isaiah, who lived at that time, (Isai. xxxvi. xxxvii., liii. 7). Some have on this ground ascribed the Psalm to Isaiah. Verse 22 is applied by St. Paul (Rom. viii. 36,) to the persecutions of the Christian Church. It is perhaps notice-worthy, that while this supplication of the Church of Israel begins with words of confidence and ends in despondency, that part of the Litany of our own Church which recalls it, begins in earnest and even mournful prayer, and goes on from that to the assurance of faith which the recollection of God's recorded marvels cannot fail to bring forth.

FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

PSALM xlv. *Eructavit cor meum.*

1. My heart is inditing of a good matter :
I speak of the things which I have made unto
the King.

2. My tongue is the pen : of a ready
writer.

Heb. My heart is overflowing with a good word :
I will speak my makings upon the King.
May my tongue be as the pen of a skilful scribe !

The heavens overflowed with joy on that night when 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' The angels sang of glory to God, and of peace and good-will to men, when the King of all came unto His own into the city of David, and He was born a Saviour Who is Christ the Lord. Can those glad tidings of great joy fill the messengers who bring them with transport, and wake up the harmonies of heaven, and shall they to whom they are brought receive them in dark and thankless silence, with cold and niggard hearts? If ever there is a time to rejoice, that time is now; if ever there is a time to sing, that time is on the birthday of the Christ. The loving and the hallowing thoughts which the sight of incarnate Love awakens, must be their own music and their own melody. The tongue will give them eager utterance, as the swift pen of a writer tries to set down the things that arise in his mind; yet the thoughts are swifter than the pen, and the 'utterance of the Spirit' will get before the utterings of the lips.

3. Thou art fairer than the children of men : full of grace are Thy lips, because God hath blessed Thee for ever.

He is fair Who is eternal love; He is fair Who hath come now to us with the sweetness of mercy, with the brightness of truth, with the loveliness of meekness, with the glory of power, with the gentleness of innocence, with the beauty of self-sacrifice. He is fair upon the Virgin's bosom—He is fair in the

manger of humility—He is fair in His manifestation to the wise men—He is fair in His obedience to His parents—He is fair in His wonders of healing and of mercy—fair when standing before His enemies—fair when crowned with thorns—fair when pierced upon the Cross—fair when lying in the tomb—fair when risen from the dead—fair when sitting on the right hand of God. He is fairer than the children of men, though He be the Son of Man, for He is perfect in His fairness, because He is perfect in His sinlessness. To each of His saints has been given a measure of grace, but to Him grace without measure. He has spoken to us, and what can His people do, but all bear Him witness and wonder at the gracious words which proceed from His mouth? Who has ever said, as He said—‘Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace;’ ‘Suffer little children to come unto Me;’ ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;’ ‘Feed My Lambs?’ Oh! love we not ourselves, so vile and sin-stained as we are, but love we Him Whom God hath blessed for ever, full of grace and truth; and so in Him and in His love shall we be blessed too.

4. Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most Mighty : according to Thy worship and renown.

5. Good luck have Thou with Thine honour : ride on, because of the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness ; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.

6. Thy arrows are very sharp, and the people shall be subdued unto Thee : even in the midst among the King's enemies.

For He came fair as a little child, and gracious as a little child, Whom the apostle of love saw when heaven was opened before him,—‘ And behold a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns, and He had a name written that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood : and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations : and He shall rule them with a rod of iron ; and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.’ His sword will be the keenness of the Holy Spirit ; His honour will be the perfection of goodness ; the terrible things which His right hand will do will be truth, and meekness, and righteousness ; for what can be more terrible than truth to liars—what more terrible than meekness to oppressors—what more terrible than righteousness to the selfish and unjust ? His words will indeed pierce to the very inmost spirit ; they will destroy the sin while they

spare the sinner; and the careless and unbelieving, who have been His enemies, shall be subdued to His grace and truth, and own Him for their righteous King.

7. Thy seat, O God, endureth for ever : the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

8. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity : wherefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.

9. All Thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia : out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad.

Heb. All thy garments are myrrh, aloes and cassia,

Out of palaces of ivory, by which they gladden thee !

This is the declaration of God the eternal Father unto God the eternal Son ; and such are the powers and offices allotted to Him. ‘But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.’ The throne of God the Son is everlasting ; He reigns for ever. When the number of God’s elect is accomplished, and all things are placed beneath His feet, and death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed, then His mediatorial reign will be ended, and the Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him that puts all things under Him, that God

may be all in all. It will be by His subjection that He will reign, even as by His subjection He conquered and was exalted. As the Lamb slain, and as the Mediator between earth and heaven, He will give up the kingdom to God and the Father, when sin shall be no more, and man shall be made perfect in heaven: but though His mediatorial reign, in which He was 'inferior to the Father as touching His manhood' shall cease; though the hour shall come in which mercy shall no more be asked for, and grace against sin no more be needed,—His reign of glory, as the Son of God and the King of saints, shall never cease. The first must be accomplished and pass away, that the second may be established in its almighty fulness. The law of right is an eternal law, the throne of holiness is an everlasting throne. The Son of God came through wrong to establish righteousness, and through death to give eternal life; and therefore was He the beloved Son in Whom the Father was well pleased; therefore did the Holy Ghost descend like a dove and light upon Him; therefore was He anointed with the Spirit without measure. His body was anointed for burial for His fellows, for He became mortal to give them immortality, and therefore was the Messiah of the world anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. And that unction of unmeasured grace which is poured upon His head flows down over all His garments. The members share in that which their Head has gained. *The sweetness of His humility, the perfume of His*

holiness, the richness of His wisdom, will be imparted unto them, like the ointment of myrrh, aloes, and of cassia gives fragrance to the garments it is sprinkled on. They shall be stored in the consciences of God's elect, like costly perfumes in kings' palaces of ivory; and when their odour is spread abroad, He Who gave them shall be glad in them; for He is the ornament and joy of His chosen ones, even as they are His.

10. King's daughters were among Thy honourable women : upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours.

To each loving soul who thus contemplates 'the King, in His beauty,' there comes the same voice which talked with St. John,—'Come hither, I will shew thee the Lamb's wife.' Around Him all the nations of the earth shall be gathered, to honour Him and to have honour from Him; and at His right hand is His bride, the Church, spotless, unwrinkled, glorious, betrothed to her eternal Lord in the mighty mystery of that union by which He and His redeemed are one flesh,—by which He became one flesh with them, that they might be one flesh in Him. She is arrayed in garments precious with the gold of wisdom, and wrought about with righteousness and salvation,—salvation preached to divers nations, each in their own tongue, but joining all tongues, divers though they be, in the seamless unity of the undivided faith.

11. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear : forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.

12. So shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty : for He is thy Lord God, and worship thou Him.

13. And the daughter of 'Tyre shall be there with a gift : like as the rich also among the people shall make their supplication before thee.

She who was once the child of other parents is become the daughter of the everlasting God : for 'we are all children of Him by faith which is in Christ Jesus.' She who was once not beloved is now the beloved of the Beloved. By newness of life and holy obedience, by the hearing of the Word and meditation upon it, shall she pass from the realm of nature to the realm of grace ; and the child of time shall become the daughter of eternity. This is one of the works of the Church in those who are born again—to forget, and to teach her members to forget, their old passions, their old temptations, their old desires ; for them 'the old things are passed away, and all things are become new.' Thus shall all the redeemed be joined together in and with the one eternal Bridegroom, loving Him with perfect love, because He first loved them, and worshipping Him with holy fear, because He is their Lord and God. All the honour of the Church lies in her love and reverence for her Lord ; when He has pleasure in

her faith and holiness, and she reverences Him in obedience and sincerity, it is well with her. Then the nations of the world honour her, and make her the channel of their offerings to God; 'the kings of the earth do bring their honour and glory' unto her; and they who have knowledge, and they who have authority, and they who have wealth, hasten to consecrate their gifts and powers by using them for her advancement and to her adornment.

14. The King's daughter is all glorious within : her clothing is of wrought gold.

15. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work : the virgins that be her fellows shall bear her company, and shall be brought unto Thee.

16. With joy and gladness shall they be brought : and shall enter into the King's palace.

But whatever may be the outward ornaments of the Church, her brightest beauty, her highest glory, is that grace which dwells within her through the glory of her eternal King. In this she is the image of each holy soul, which like her may be called the daughter of God, that she is the temple of the Holy Ghost. That through her prayers, through her teachings, through her ministerings, through her holy rites, through her sacraments, grace is given to each one of her members—this is her surpassing diadem and most shining vestment. If any of her other offices be grand and

glorious, 'shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?' The full brightness of the hidden and mysterious adorning is seen only by Him Who seeth in secret; He Who gives the grace only knows the mightiness of this highest glory; but she has other raiment woven for her in the wisdom of the All-wise, which all may see, the fair adornings of 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' Clothed with these without and full of grace within, shall she be brought like a bride unto the eternal Bridegroom; and with her and in her shall the Church of the nations be adorned, for the same King and Lord of all. And joy shall follow joy, and praise shall strive with praise, as that glad band shall pass on into the many mansions of eternity, into the high abiding-place where the virgin souls 'which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,' are found 'without fault before the throne of God.'

17. Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children : whom thou mayest make princes in all lands.

In Him and through Him Who is the Almighty Bridegroom, Who hath betrothed us to Himself in the mystery of His incarnation, shall we each one 'be kings and priests unto God.' In Him and through Him shall the twelve apostles of the new covenant be added to the twelve patriarchs of the old covenant, to make up that number of which the beloved disciple speaks:—'Round about the throne

were four-and-twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.'

18. I will remember Thy Name from one generation to another: therefore shall the people give thanks unto Thee, world without end.

Of Him Who was incarnate and was born for us, Who has conquered and will conquer the kingdoms of the world, Who left His eternal Father and His Virgin mother to join the Church, the assembly of all believing souls, in unending union to Himself; of Him shall each one saved by Him ever be mindful; to Him shall the world which was redeemed by Him ascribe unceasing praise and return unceasing thanks both now and here, and when time shall be no more.

The title of this Psalm is "to the chief Musician, upon Shoshannim, or lilies, a Maschil by the sons of Korah, a song of loves, or for the beloved." It was written by the Korahite Levites for the public service of the temple, as containing a deep lesson for them who heard it: this much is clear. "The lilies" the LXX. render, "for those who shall be changed," and is applied by the Fathers to the baptized: it may either be a tune so called, or may refer to the king's daughters and virgin attendants which the Psalm celebrates. (Cant. ii. 1, 2.) "The beloved" was the person for whose nuptials the Psalm was written, (Isa. v. 1); the occasion which called it forth was perhaps the marriage of one of the kings of Judah, possibly Solomon, but that the king is described as a warrior; but the true intention of the Psalm is to celebrate "the spiritual marriage and unity of Christ and His Church." (Compare the Canticles throughout, and Isa. liv. 5, lxii. 5; St. John iii. 29; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 27, 32; Rev. xxi. 2, xxii. 17.) In fact, this type of marriage is mystically used in holy

Scripture to signify the joining not only of each soul, but of the whole Church, to the Son of God, from the second chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelations. That it is a clear and plain prophecy of Christ the Lord, Heb. i. 8, 9 very plainly shew us, for in that Epistle the Psalm is said to be a speech of the Holy Spirit to the Son of God. The Psalm follows the observances of an Eastern marriage, in which the bridegroom goes first to the bride in the house of her father. The bride is exhorted to forget her own people and relations in the love of her spouse, in order that he may love her in return. The procession then sets out for the bridegroom's palace, and the bride is brought in rich raiment, and accompanied with many virgin attendants, to her husband's home, where she receives a nuptial blessing. (Compare Gen. xxiv. 60.) It needs but a little knowledge of the New Testament to trace out how each of these circumstances was fulfilled in our redemption. Poems of this kind, and such as the Song of Solomon, are still popular among Eastern nations, which under the appearance of a love-poem or a marriage-song conceal truths of philosophy or doctrines of theology; and the better instructed value themselves much on understanding these poems in their mystical sense.

PSALM xlii. *Deus noster refugium.*

1. God is our hope and strength : a very present help in trouble.

2. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved : and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea.

3. Though the waters thereof rage and swell : and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.

There is One in Whom we may store up our hope, One in Whom we may be strong when trouble and distress come,—even He to Whom the disciples came when they were storm-tost on the sea, saying, ‘Lord, save us; we perish.’ In Him, if we have faith, may we abide secure and undismayed,

though earth and heaven pass away. For if faith can herself bid the mountains be removed and placed in the midst of the sea, and they shall obey; surely faith need not be astonished or be troubled, when the mountains are removed and carried into the midst of the sea! No change can trouble him who trusts in the Unchangeable. 'The earth must ever be in movement and in storm. 'The waves of this troublesome world' needs must rise and fall; and we, as we be faithful or doubting, may either be carried onward by them to our refuge,—for they will bear us the more speedily as they swell more roughly,—or else be swallowed up amid their roarings, and sink into their depths. All earthly powers, however for awhile they may be strong and high, must pass away and come to wreck; and ever and anon they are shaken and made to totter amid the ceaseless whirl and storm of mortal things.

4. The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God : the holy place of the tabernacle of the most Highest.

LXX. The Highest hath sanctified His tabernacle.

5. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed : God shall help her, and that right early.

Heb. God helps her in the break of morning.

Earthly powers shall shake when the winds are strong and the floods rage; but that city which is built upon the rock of unwavering faith and unchanging truth is above and beyond their power.

Without and away from the Church of God there are tempests and tossings of the waves; within her and beside her walls flows quietly the river of immortal grace,—not any longer like the scanty brook of Shiloah flowing past the old Jerusalem, but in a full and ceaseless stream, refreshing, cleansing, gladdening, hallowing those who dwell beneath the shadows of the House of God. Within her are opened again the sources of that fourfold river so long kept closed, which flowed in the beginning through paradise. The world is moved, the Church shall not be moved, because her God is not only above her, but within her. Where His own are gathered in His Name, there is He in the midst of them. He shall rise early to help His Church. They who put their trust in Him shall be delivered, as Hezekiah and his people from the Assyrians, suddenly and early. ‘Behold at eventide trouble: before the morning comes it is no more!’

6. The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved : but God hath shewed His voice, and the earth shall melt away.

Heb. The peoples roar, kingdoms shake :

He utters with His voice, the earth melts.

They who have no trust are terrified and confounded when trouble comes; they cry and there is none to help them : the kingdoms of the world are changed and moved; ‘the mighty are put down from their seat, the rich are sent empty away.’ But when He speaks in judgment, when He calls the

race of men before His throne, earthly hopes shall vanish, earthly schemes fall into nothing, earthly power shall fail; yea, the very fabric, earth itself, shall be dissolved and depart away.

7. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Not the might of men, nor of angels, nor of powers, nor of any creatures earthly or heavenly, but the Lord of hosts is with His own; the God of Jacob is their refuge. What are hosts, without the Lord of hosts? He Who sent angels came after angels,—came that angels might serve Him,—came that He might make men equal to angels. Mighty grace! ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’

8. O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord : what destruction He hath brought upon the earth.

9. He maketh wars to cease in all the world : He breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire.

Strange must have been the exultation and the wonder of the people of Jerusalem when they were marvellously delivered from the hand of Sennacherib,—when ‘the angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.’ Their armies were spoiled; their weapons of war were made useless; their chariots

were given up to be destroyed to them against whom they had prepared them ; and this was the doing of God, not of man, the act of the justice of the Almighty, not of mortal power. Much more marvellous will be His doings in that time which He has reserved, when He shall establish His Church in perfect peace, when the enemies of righteousness shall be utterly taken away, and there shall be no more strife and no more war for ever.

10. Be still then, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the heathen, and I will be exalted in the earth.

11. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge.

As for God's people, 'their strength is to sit still.' Rabshakeh, the ambassador of the king of Assyria, had scorned at the thought that God would deliver His people ; and in faith Hezekiah had prayed to the Lord his God to be saved,—'that all the kingdoms of the earth might know that He was the Lord, even He only.' And thus was he answered, and thus were the Assyrians answered : 'Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldest be,' to do My bidding. And so in all danger and in all distress, He Who is the Lord of nature is also the Lord of man. He Who 'arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still ; and the *wind ceased* and there was a great calm,' can order

the nations of the world at His Almighty will, and will make them fall down before Him, and own Him for their Lord, when He has determined that it shall be so in the counsels of His providence and His grace. In the meanwhile He is with His Church always, even to the end. His name is 'Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.' And His elect, however weak in themselves, are strong in Him; and the less they seek in selfishness to provide for their own safety, the surer refuge shall they find in His love and protecting grace.

This Psalm is "to the chief Musician, by the Sons of Korah, a song of joy for the Virgins;" but the LXX. translate this last word "upon mysteries." It was therefore composed to be sung either in the service of the temple, or in a thanksgiving procession, by a choir of the maidens of Jerusalem. The internal evidence of the Psalm itself leads to the conclusion that it was written after the deliverance of Jerusalem from the invasion of Sennacherib and the Assyrians in the reign of Hezekiah, and was an expression of thanksgiving. (Isa. xxxvi., xxxvii.) If it were the case that it was chanted in public by a choir of virgins, it would fulfil to the letter Isaiah's saying,—

"The virgin the daughter of Sion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn;

The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee." (Isa. xxxvii. 22.)

A comparison of verses 2, 3, 4, with Isa. viii. 6, 7, 8, will confirm the impression that it was written while Isaiah's prophecies were familiar to the people; the mention of the river of water gladdening the city would be natural, when the supply of water which had been stopped, was again restored. (2 Chron. xxxii. 3, 4.) The address of Hezekiah to the people is in the very same spirit of confidence which fills the Psalm, (Ibid. 7, 8); and the peace and repose which it celebrates in verses 7, 8, 9, is that which the miraculous destruction of his enemies brought to Hezekiah. (Ibid. xxii. 23.) The describing the invasion of the Assyrians as a mighty and tempestuous flood roaring outside the walls of Jerusalem, while the city was in safety, is in accordance with the general tone of Eastern poetry.

Ebening Prayer.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

PSALM xlvii. *Omnes gentes, plaudite.*

1. O CLAP your hands together, all ye people : O sing unto God with the voice of melody.

2. For the Lord is high, and to be feared : He is the great King upon all the earth.

The coming of Christ's kingdom in its fulness is a sight of most deep and perfect joy. All peoples can rejoice in it, because He has subdued all peoples to Himself. His victories are not victories which make the conquered slaves, but victories which make the conquered free. Therefore must we 'lift up holy hands' with our hearts and voices in celebrating the triumphs of our ascended Lord. We must shew forth His praise 'not only with our lips, but in our lives.' He Who was once humble and of no reputation is now exalted. He Who once was mocked is become most terrible in glory. Earthly powers no longer bear rule over us, whom He has set at liberty from earth : but He is become the Lord of our hands, and lips, and souls, Who is the only Potentate and the only King.

3. He shall subdue the people under us : and the nations under our feet.

4. He shall choose out an heritage for us : *even the worship of Jacob, whom He loved.*

In His victory shall the Church have victory, for all her victories are but the fillings up of His one victory. It is His grace that shall bring the world under the influence and the guidance of the Church. He shall bring the nations from far to sit at the feet of His ministers and pastors. They win their way not by the weapons of the world, but by His word, which is mightier than all man's deed. By calling on His name Who once was crucified, but now is exalted, the evil one is put to silence, and the powers of death are driven back. He hath chosen an heritage for us, and He hath chosen us for His heritage, even as He chose Jacob, and that which was excellent in Jacob, for Himself, at His own loving will.

5. God is gone up with a merry noise : and the Lord with the sound of the trump.

He Who from eternity hath filled both earth and heaven, yet in His own appointed time ascended from earth to heaven. He went up from the Mount of Olives, even as Enoch and Elijah had gone up before ; yet not borne up, as they were, by the aid of angels, but by His own almighty power. He broke the bands of earth as a spider's web, He triumphed over the powers of the air ; and entered, amid the adoring mirth of angels and the wondering joy of men, into His own exceeding glory. And the proclamation of the heavenly messenger, ' Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven,' waxes, ever as the years roll on, ' louder and louder ;

like the trumpet-blast on Sinai, until 'the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised' at the Advent summons.

6. O sing praises, sing praises unto our God : O sing praises, sing praises unto our King.

7. For God is the King of all the earth : sing ye praises with understanding.

The true worship of God is praise. Prayer is for our need ; praise is for His glory. He Who was God before all ages is now King over us ; therefore we praise God Who created us, and we praise God Who redeemed us. We must honour the Son even as we honour the Father ; we must honour Him Who became a servant, even as we honour Him as a King. 'He is our praise, and He is our God.' Yea, all our hymns of praise must be sung before Him with the understanding as well as with the spirit, knowing Him and confessing Him, no less than praising Him, Who was God before the flesh, and yet for our sake became God with the flesh and in the flesh.

8. God reigneth over the heathen : God sitteth upon His holy seat.

9. The princes of the people are joined unto the people of the God of Abraham : for God, Which is very high exalted, doth defend the earth as it were with a shield.

God has ever been reigning over the world ; but

His kingdom has now been clearly manifested; He has openly taken possession of it. Christ has sat down in glory; His holy seat is upon the right hand of the Father; yet if we by holiness prepare a place for Him within our hearts, He will descend again and take His seat therein. Thus in the risen and ascended Lord are fulfilled the promises made to Abraham,—‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;’ ‘They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.’ For He Who now reigneth on the throne of glory once hung upon the Cross in shame,—‘that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.’ He is exalted on high above the earth, yet doth He still watch over and defend the earth, on which once He dwelt in weakness, by the mightiness of His providence and of His grace.

This Psalm, “by the sons of Korah,” is appointed for Holy Thursday. There is no period in the history of Israel to which it can be definitely assigned, unless there is a reference in verse 5 to “David and all the house of Israel bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet,” (2 Sam. vi. 15); which may lead us to suppose that it was used on that occasion. It has also been assigned to the time of Jehoshaphat, (see 2 Chron. xx. 19). It was doubtless a Psalm commonly used in the temple service on festival occasions.

FOR WHIT-SUNDAY.

PSALM xlviii. *Magnus Dominus.*

1. GREAT is the Lord, and highly to be praised : in the city of our God, even upon His holy hill.

A King is best honoured by His own people, and the Lord is best praised by His Church. His honour is hers, and her honour is His; all the glory that she has is given unto her by Him, and therefore should she render to Him again that which she first received. He has laid her foundations; He has raised up her walls: and the rock on which He has built her up is Himself; therefore is she bound to praise Him.

2. The hill of Sion is a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth: upon the north-side lieth the city of the great King; God is well known in her palaces as a sure refuge.

Heb. Beautiful in extension,

The joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion:

In the northern side is the city of the great King.

That which makes the Church strong makes her fair; but it is holiness and unity that make her strong, therefore holiness and unity will make her fair. In her, and in that Saviour Who is with her, all the nations of the earth shall find a blessing. Beneath the shadow of her towers lie in safety and repose the dwellings of the redeemed of God. They are the defence and ornament of that world-wide city which has owned the true King for her king, and has placed itself beneath that law of His which bids that 'His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Within her walls, by prayers, by litanies, by psalms, by creeds, by thanksgivings, by hearing His *holy Word* and partaking His holy Sacraments, do

God's faithful people make known their needs to Him, and is He made known in His truth and grace to them.

3. For lo, the kings of the earth : are gathered, and gone by together.

4. They marvelled to see such things : they were astonished, and suddenly cast down.

5. Fear came there upon them, and sorrow : as upon a woman in her travail.

Against the Church of Christ kings of the earth and their people have arisen from time to time. They put forth their power; they tried the faith and the patience of Christ's people; and they passed away. Tyrants and persecutors have raged against her, and have gone, like the Ammonites and the Moabites within sight of Jerusalem, in the wilderness of Tekoa. They wrought guilt and woe to themselves; but their violence only added to the glory and the salvation of the saints whom they persecuted. 'The despisers beheld, and wondered, and perished.' They were astonished to see that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church: the grace and power of Christ shewed forth in His saints perplexed and confused their plans. They had to learn, that if their power was not to end in fear, and their triumph in sharp and unexpected sorrow, it could only be by gathering themselves together, not against Him, but in Him Who is the one great King. So shall the Church ever conquer her enemies by bringing them into

subjection to her Lord through her patience and firm trust in His salvation.

6. Thou shalt break the ships of the sea : through the east-wind.

Heb. By the east wind Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish.

But it is only by her Lord that the Church gains 'the true riches : ' when she enters into traffick with the world, she takes the means of the world for her resources ; and when she trusts in her wealth, in her political power, in earthly cunning, to make merchandise, the instruments she adopts come to nothing in her hands, and leave her helpless and poor. It is then with her spiritual rulers as it was with Jehoshaphat the king of Jerusalem, when 'he joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly ; and joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish : and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber : then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.'

7. Like as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God : God upholdeth the same for ever.

8. We wait for Thy loving-kindness, O God : in the midst of Thy temple.

In Christ's Church we hear the prophecies of *His coming kingdom* ; in His Church we see them

fulfilled. We hear that ‘all the ends of the earth shall remember themselves, and be turned to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him, and day by day we see the work being day by day wrought out. Prophets and apostles are joined together as citizens of the city of God—the one speaking, the other doing. And that Church He hath established for ever, Who said unto her people, ‘Behold I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’ In her courts, in her sacraments, in her means of grace, are we brought near to the Lord, and do we gain His mercy. We wait for Him in the place in which He has appointed that He will meet us, and will be in the midst of us.

9. O God, according to Thy Name, so is Thy praise unto the world’s end : Thy right hand is full of righteousness.

10. Let the mount Sion rejoice, and the daughter of Judah be glad : because of Thy judgements.

As the power of Christ is over all the world, and His redemption was for all the world, so shall His Name be known in all the world ; and where His Name is known, there it must be praised : the Church shall praise her Lord, ‘according to His excellent greatness.’ He is the great High Priest consecrated with His own most righteous blood : and His right hand, which the nails once pierced through, shall recompense to each human soul according to his works, ‘to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile’—

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shall give grace and peace to the righteous, and pain and restlessness to the unrighteous. And in His righteous judgment His holy Church shall rejoice: for they who truly are in the communion of His saints shall be on His right hand and shall enter into His joy on the great day, when His sentence of all-righteous judgment shall be pronounced for ever.

11. Walk about Sion, and go round about her : and tell the towers thereof.

12. Mark well her bulwarks, set up her houses : that ye may tell them that come after.

13. For this God is our God for ever and ever : He shall be our guide unto death.

Therefore is the Church not merely a visible body, to be judged of by worldly experience. She is a union of the seen and of the unseen; a means by which the Holy Ghost joins earth and heaven in a common link; a bringing into one communion the living and the departed, angels and mortal men. Let the children of men walk round about her, count her towers of faith, mark her bulwarks of salvation, and her houses of praise, and then not idly forget what they have seen, but store up the history of what she has done in time past, and the traditions of her holiness and her meekness, that they may be a model for the years to come to copy and to abide in. It may be that the Church may undergo changes and sorrows. Her trust may in many things be turned to

herself, not to her Lord; her glory may be lessened, her towers be made to fall through lust of worldly treasure, the unity of her bounding-wall may be broken and marred, the fairness of her houses may depart, and in her time of humiliation and of perplexity mockers may say of her, 'Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?' But though her outward condition may change, though she may be humbled and be raised again, her King and God changes not. His mightiness is everlasting. He will rule her, and guide her and all her members through trials and persecutions, and strifes, and divisions, and sorrows, unto death, and through and beyond death, even into immortal life.

This is "a joyful song by the children of Korah," sung by the Levites, as verse 8 shews, in the temple. The occasion on which it was written was clearly the invasion of Judæa by the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, in the reign of Jehoshaphat, (2 Chron. xx.). They advanced within sight of Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat, on the sight of the danger of the city, proclaimed a fast and prayed; a prophetic message was brought to him from God by Jahaziel, a Levite, to encourage him, upon which the Kohathites and the Korhites "stood up to praise God." On his going out to battle he set singers before his army, and when they began their hymn of praise, the swords of the enemies were turned one against the other, and Jehoshaphat took the spoil of their armies without a battle. And on their return Jehoshaphat and his soldiers "came to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets, unto the house of the Lord;" and doubtless then sung this Psalm to the praise of the God Who had delivered them. Verse 6, with the mention of the ships of Tarshish, would be a warning to them in their joy against presumption, (2 Chron. xx. 35—37). With verse 9 compare Exodus xxix. 9, with the marginal rendering. "To fill the hand" is the Hebrew phrase for "to consecrate." Tarshish is considered to be either Carthage in Africa, or Tartessus in Spain. The Psalm, which mystically dwells on the reality and the order and the *beauty of the Church*, is appointed for Whit-Sunday.

PSALM xlix. *Audite hæc, omnes.*

1. O hear ye this, all ye people : ponder it with your ears, all ye that dwell in the world ;

2. High and low, rich and poor : one with another.

Of all the questions that call for man's attention, by far the most important is that of his own life and his own being. Is this life all, or is there another life after it? Are the pleasure and the power of this world the greatest things we can desire, or are there any higher and nobler aims beyond and after them? This is the question of questions, which all the children of Adam, high and low, rich and poor, must be ever asking themselves; and therefore all living men, all that dwell in the world, may well be called upon to listen to the answer—and not merely to listen to it, but to ponder it well; for upon it, and upon their receiving it, does their true life and all their right doing and happiness depend.

3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom : and my heart shall muse of understanding.

4. I will incline mine ear to the parable : and shew my dark speech upon the harp.

He before whom the Spirit of God has opened the nature of his own being and the destiny of his soul, will love to lead his brother men, whether *rich or poor*, to that same solemn knowledge. He *will think over long and well* those awful facts which

encompass us around,—birth and the grave, life and death, power and weakness, joy and sorrow, holiness and sin, the spirit and the flesh ; he will muse upon their mysterious influence upon us, at once the creatures of dust and the children of God, until at last his soul discerns their proper and appointed order, and his mouth is able to speak of the things his heart has mused on, as each and all displaying the eternal wisdom and love of Him Who devised them and arranged them, and placed among them man, the last-made of His creatures. He will listen reverently and meekly to the mighty parable of the universe : one by one the hidden reasons of God's providence will unfold themselves before him. He will lay his ear down close to the chords of that mighty instrument of God's dealings ; and will strive to attune his own heart to His truth and holiness. He will see that there is a harmony and an order in all His ways and works ; and that sight will call forth within his soul those true and high and holy thoughts which are their own music, which cheer us in our doubt and dulness, as the harp cheers him who is sorrowful.

5. Wherefore should I fear in the days of wickedness : and when the wickedness of my heels compasseth me round about ?

Heb. Why should I fear in the days of calamity,
When the wickedness of my supplanters hemmeth me in ?

Or otherwise :—

Why should I fear in the evil days,
When the evil of my latter end comes upon me ?

There was one who deceived man and caused his fall; who brought both sin and misery upon him; who 'bruised his heel' by making him subject unto death. Through that sin, into which the first man through the craft of the Evil one fell, the days of our mortal life have become few and evil, we are surrounded with temptations and with tempters; and whatever we may do, however we may struggle to escape, Death, with his messenger Pain before him, and his attendant the Grave following him close, is waiting for us as his own. We do fear death,—that is certain. But why should we fear him? And how can we escape the fear of him? This is a dark and difficult question, which man needs both wisdom and grace to answer.

6. There be some that put their trust in their goods : and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches.

7. But no man may deliver his brother : nor make agreement unto God for him ;

8. For it cost more to redeem their souls : so that he must let that alone for ever ;

9. Yea, though he live long : and see not the grave.

Heb. There are those who rely upon their wealth,
And glory in the abundance of their riches :
But no man of them can by any redemption redeem his
brother,
Nor give unto God his atonement—
For precious is the ransom of their souls,
And he must leave it alone for ever—

So that he should live continually,
And never see the grave.

Some will not try to answer it. They prefer to be getting riches ; and they gradually come 'to take it for granted that a man's life does consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Their thought is—Let us have much, and we shall do well. But riches will not purchase life. A man, however rich, cannot purchase life for another ; still less can he for himself. The atonement which human souls require is not of corruptible things, such as silver and gold ; it is something purer, holier, dearer far. Immortal spirits cannot be redeemed with mortal treasures. Eternal life cannot be bought with the things of time. They who trust in their goods will ever find that their trust fails them in the hour when they need it most—the hour of death. They who boast in their riches, and think that in them is life and peace, will be made to know that their 'money shall perish with them ; because they have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.'

10. For he seeth that wise men also die,
and perish together : as well as the ignorant
and foolish, and leave their riches for other.

Heb. Truly it is seen that wise men die :
Even as the simple and ignorant do they perish,
And leave their substance to others.

11. And yet they think that their houses
shall continue for ever : and that their dwell-

ing-places shall endure from one generation to another ; and call the lands after their own names.

12. Nevertheless, man will not abide in honour : seeing he may be compared unto the beasts that perish ; this is the way of them.

Heb. For man, though he be in honour, doth not abide ;
He may be compared to the beasts that perish.

There are others who see the helplessness of riches, and trust rather to their knowledge or their reputation. They make it the object of their life to know more than others, to be above the rest of the world in their intelligence and their wisdom. But yet this wisdom, though the aim of the less groveling, is no better a help than riches against the power of death. The man who has knowledge dies, even as he dies who has it not. The stores they have got together are not for themselves, but for others after them ; they must give them up, and go equally with the simple and the uninstructed, to the place of common doom. And if riches and knowledge are no safeguards against death, neither is earthly honour and fame. Men may be the founders of houses and families which they think will last ; they may have cities and territories, or even continents, called after their names : but their reputation and honour cannot secure them from death. And then he who thought himself above others is not even *ranked among men*, but is compared to the beasts

that perish. What men call immortal fame is but a mockery to him who has to return to the dust with other created things. It is immortal life that the soul really needs. It may be the way of man to desire these things, but it can only lead him to nothingness and gloom.

13. This is their foolishness : and their posterity praise their saying.

Yet men say that riches are life, or that knowledge is life, or that fame is life; and they act upon what they say, and others hear them with pleasure, and see them, and commend them for so doing. They lay up their maxims and examples as things to be praised and imitated, when they are in truth stumbling-blocks to their souls, and utter folly. Men praise them; but what saith God to such?—‘Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?’

14. They lie in the hell like sheep, death gnaweth upon them, and the righteous shall have domination over them in the morning : their beauty shall consume in the sepulchre out of their dwelling.

Heb. They are appointed for the grave like sheep ;

Death is the shepherd over them :

And the righteous have dominion over them in the morning.

Their form passes away in the grave their dwelling.

15. But God hath delivered my soul from the place of hell : for He shall receive me.

They who have thus misplaced their trust cannot escape from the grave. They follow one another, even as a flock of sheep follow one another to the slaughter, into that unseen world of gloom and fear. Death is their shepherd; he shall lead them to the pastures of darkness and by the waters of sorrow; he 'feeds the flock for the slaughter,' for their own desolation and ruin. How then shall man overcome the fear of death, which he fain must feel? That awful riddle still remains unopened. The prophets and holy men of old by the Spirit of God were able to guess at the answer; but to us has the truth been revealed in its entirety by Him Who said,—'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.' He hath said of man, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' In the Son of God, Who died for us, shall we live; in Him Who rose shall we rise; and He shall give to His apostles who followed Him on earth, that 'in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, they also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;'—while they who know Him not, and love Him not, lie down in death without hope, and become the spoil of corruption. Through Him we can conquer death, and the fear of death; through Him we are delivered from the grave and its power; through Him we are received into that high dwelling where the *parable* of God's providence is fully opened, and

the sayings and dealings of His government are no longer dark.

16. Be not thou afraid, though one be made rich : or if the glory of his house be increased ;

17. For he shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth : neither shall his pomp follow him.

18. For while he lived, he counted himself an happy man : and so long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee.

They who fear God, and wait in life and in death for His deliverance, need feel no emotion of fear or wonder, or trouble, at seeing a mortal exalted above themselves, either in wealth, or in honour and power. It makes no real distinction ; it does not raise him above the common lot of the sons of men. He must die and leave it. 'He brought nothing into this world, and it is certain he can carry nothing out.' All his pomp and power deserts him at the grave. While he was still alive, and had his good things in his own power, he thought himself happy. 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,' is the too natural speech of the worldly man to himself ; and, strange as it may seem, men do not rebuke such selfishness ; they rather applaud and speak well of it.

19. He shall follow the generation of his fathers : and shall never see light.

But every one must go where his fathers have gone ; he must go where it will be enquired of him, not what good he has had, but what good he has done ; not what he has boasted in, but what he has prayed for. There, where 'high and low, rich and poor, one with another,' are all gathered, the only noble will be the elect, the only vile the lost, the only rich the righteous, the only poor the unbelieving. There he who has trusted in his possessions will find, too late, that they have become things which possess him, and sink him down into the everlasting darkness, 'where is wailing and gnashing of teeth.'

20. Man being in honour hath no understanding : but is compared unto the beasts that perish.

Heb. Man in honour, but without understanding,

May be compared unto the beasts,—they shall perish.

Surely, then, all should hear and ponder these things, for they concern all. To know how to submit to death, but to escape his terror, is the highest knowledge for man who has to die. The whole life of the wise should be a making ready for death. The first man brought death into the world, the second Man brought life and immortality : by nature we are heirs of the first, by faith we become co-heirs with the second. No earthly honour, no worldly fame, can deliver us in the hour of death : they who have made

such things their trust shall depart helpless and hopeless, as the beast that perishes. ‘Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.’ The understanding His will Who only can redeem our souls is man’s truest honour and his deepest wisdom.

Some one of the sons of Korah was the author of this Psalm, which is an ancient poem, written probably before the time of David. It resembles in some points the book of Job; and sets out the vanity of mortal life and the certainty of death as warnings to men against placing their trust in riches, knowledge, or fame. Faith in God is pointed out as the only sure hope in death. The word here translated in different places “hell” and “the grave” is in the original “*Sheol*,” which signifies generally “the unseen world, or the place of departed spirits.” It conveys the idea of mournfulness and gloom, but not necessarily of torment. The LXX. vary considerably from our versions in translating the latter verses of this mysterious and solemn Psalm.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM I. *Deus deorum.*

1. The Lord, even the most mighty God, hath spoken : and called the world, from the rising up of the sun, unto the going down thereof.

The eternal God, the ‘Lord of all power and might,’ Who spake in the times past by His angels and by His prophets, hath also spoken, and shall yet speak again, by His Son, by Whom He made the world, and to Whom He hath given the judgment of the world. On that final day whose coming is hidden yet in His secret counsels, ‘at the voice of

the archangel and the trump of God,' each child of Adam shall be called before His throne. From one end of the world to the other, and from the first sun of the creation to the last which shall rise, all, both the living and the dead, shall be summoned to stand before Him, and shall obey.

2. Out of Sion hath God appeared : in perfect beauty.

Heb. From Sion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.

3. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence : there shall go before Him a consuming fire, and a mighty tempest shall be stirred up round about Him.

God the Father spake of old on Sinai in thunder, but He shrouded Himself in terror and darkness. But God the Son hath Himself appeared in human form in Sion, the crowning glory of whose temple He Himself became. Our God came, for the majesty of the Father was present in the Son. He came and spake there, as never man spake, words of truth, and life, and love. 'He taught as one having authority.' And the tongues of fire and the rushing mighty wind of Pentecost were sent by Him, that His word might be fulfilled—'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'

4. He shall call the heaven from above : and the earth, that He may judge His people.

5. Gather My saints together unto Me : those that have made a covenant with Me with sacrifice.

6. And the heaven shall declare His righteousness : for God is Judge Himself.

He Who hath spoken hitherto shall in the end speak yet once again, when He shall call to the heavens and to the earth, and the whole universe of angels and of men shall be assembled in His presence, in the mighty day of doom. The spirits of the saints made perfect, and they that are still alive upon the earth, shall all be there. 'For He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' His elect shall be caught up to meet Him, they who have been joined with Him by holy baptism, and have been preserved as His by His assisting grace, in that new and better covenant which He established by the sacrifice of Himself. The heavens and all the powers therein shall bear witness to His righteousness; for not one grain of His wheat shall be lost in that mighty tempest, not one sin or act of wrong shall escape His eye. God Himself, the all-seeing, the all-knowing, is the Judge, making all due allowances, but no undue ones, rewarding to every man according to what he has been and what he has done.

7. Hear, O My people, and I will speak :

I Myself will testify against thee, O Israel ; for I am God, even thy God.

And until that dread Assize, though He is no longer manifest, yet is He ever speaking to the world. By the ministrations of His Church, by the teachings of His word, by the whisperings of His Holy Spirit, is He ever bearing witness to the truth unto them who will be the true Israel and will hearken. Though He be now unseen, and has not yet the second time appeared, yet He is not the less the Almighty God, the Ruler, and Lord, and Judge of all people. His first law must still be heard with as deep fear and reverence as on the day on which it first was spoken : — ‘I am the Lord thy God : thou shalt have none other gods but Me.’

8. I will not reprove thee because of thy sacrifices, or for thy burnt-offerings : because they were not alway before Me.

Heb. Not for thy sacrifices will I reprove thee,
For thy burnt-offerings are continually before Me.

9. I will take no bullock out of thine house : nor he-goat out of thy folds.

10. For all the beasts of the forest are Mine : and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11. I know all the fowls upon the mountains : and the wild beasts of the field are in My sight.

12. If I be hungry, I will not tell thee : for

the whole world is Mine, and all that is therein.

13. Thinkest thou that I will eat bulls' flesh : and drink the blood of goats ?

The offering of sacrifices under the law was not all that the eternal God required. What needed He that man should give to Him, Who had created all things, and Whose were all things ? Nor is outward obedience all that He requires now. He desires not the offering of beasts, but the offering of man. He requires the sacrifice of the heart and spirit, the offering up of the life and being, which alone He will accept, and will render holy and perfect by that one perfect sacrifice which the Great High Priest presented before Him on the altar of the Cross. 'For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, could never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered ? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.'

14. Offer unto God thanksgiving : and pay thy vows unto the most Highest.

15. And call upon Me in the time of trou-

ble : so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise Me.

His own Son 'by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Therefore can they present an acceptable oblation, not of other creatures, but of themselves. He bids us offer that which we all have, the sacrifice of thanksgiving, the performing of our vows. We do not need frankincense; we need not lambs or bulls; we have the gift in our own hearts; we have the altar in our own conscience; the free-will sacrifice is given to us by the grace of Him Who deigns to ask us for it. Should we not give thanks unto His love Whose mercy hath forgiven us our sins! Should we not perform that which we have promised unto Him Who has established His better covenant with us, and hath sanctified us to be His children in it! But He requires not an offering from us that He may receive it, but only that He may more richly bestow upon us again the givings of His love and grace. He bids us call upon Him in our trouble, in the long trouble of this our mortal life, and He will hear and help us; and out of our trouble shall spring forth again thanksgiving, and our prayers shall yet once more be turned to praises.

16. But unto the ungodly said God : Why dost thou preach My laws, and takest My covenant in thy mouth ;

17. Whereas thou hatest to be reformed :
and hast cast My words behind thee ?

And to the ungodly there is an unceasing rebuke of their misdeeds, ever being pronounced by God, which is the beginning of that sentence which shall close the judgment-day. Christ is speaking ever to each one's spirit; the Holy Ghost is silent in no conscience. The careless talk of God's laws; they boast themselves to be Christians in covenant and name, but they will not conform their lives to that covenant, they despise that eternal rule of right which God has ordained.

18. When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst unto him : and hast been partaker with the adulterers.

19. Thou hast let thy mouth speak wickedness : and with thy tongue thou hast set forth deceit.

20. Thou satest, and spakest against thy brother : yea, and hast slandered thine own mother's son.

They give in to the fashion of the world and the evil customs of men. Dishonesty and uncleanness, blasphemy and fraud, lyings and slanderings, they judge of by the rule of the world, and not by the rule of God's commandments. They forget that by His voice on Sinai, and by the second table of His law, He has utterly forbidden and condemned such sins. They think not of God, and upon the enticements of the flesh and the world they not only do such things, but they have pleasure in them who do

them. And so they come to bear false witness against their own Divine Brother in the flesh, and to slander the Son of Man.

21. These things hast thou done, and I held My tongue, and thou thoughtest wickedly, that I am even such a one as thyself : but I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done.

Because judgments do not instantly follow upon sins, because for awhile punishment is delayed, the sinner must not indulge the blasphemous suggestion that God cares not for the breaking of His laws, that He is like men, short of sight and weak of hand. The long-suffering of God is a call to repentance, not to recklessness. But God is watching though He be waiting ; He has appointed a day in which He shall judge the world in righteousness, and then shall every falsehood and slander, every vile and unclean deed, be brought to light. Both what the wicked have done, and what they have made themselves, shall be set plainly before them. Nothing shall remain uncovered or unpunished, but there shall light upon both sin and sinners that reproof of unutterable woe—‘Depart, ye cursed.’

22. O consider this, ye that forget God : lest I pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.

Oh that men would be wise while there is yet time ! that they would receive that word which is

established by the testimony of two witnesses,—the Apostles of the circumcision and of the uncircumcision,—‘that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation!’ But they who forget God shall be reminded of Him at last by His sentence of judgment; and who is he that shall acquit when God condemns? ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’ Who can tell the terrors of that hour, when hardened sin shall be brought face to face with perfect righteousness!

23. Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me : and to him that ordereth his conversation right will I shew the salvation of God.

Heb. Whosoever offers praise shall glorify Me.

And whosoever prepares his way,

To him will I shew the salvation of God.

LXX. The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me,

And there is the way in which I will shew him the salvation of God.

We were created for God’s glory; and His glory is our being made perfect. Therefore if we give Him praise, He will give us that which He has stored up for us. He will give us Himself, and ‘He is our praise.’ For our praise is accepted before Him because we offer it not of ourselves, but it is Christ Who offers in us. He Who once offered Himself a sacrifice for us, now offers Himself in us. We must praise Him Who giveth us all with all we have received, not only with the words which grace puts into our mouths, but with the life which grace ex-

ables us to live. Holy thoughts, holy words, holy works, these are the accepted sacrifices of Him Who hath made us holy ! For in them and through them is the way unto that higher life, where all things are true, are holy, are everlasting ; where our bread is righteousness, our drink is wisdom, our garment is immortality, our being is salvation ; where there is no more weariness, no more strife, no more death, but the elect are with their Lord, and the Lord is with His elect for ever.

This Psalm, the title declares to be written by Asaph. Asaph, the son of Berechiah, lived in the time of David, (1 Chron. xv. 17, 19 ; xxv. 1,) and was a Levite engaged in the service of the sanctuary. It seems likely that this Psalm was written by him, and from its being placed immediately before the fifty-first Psalm, it may be supposed to have been composed a little before that Psalm, and to have been indited by the Holy Spirit as a rebuke for David's sin. The tone and spirit of Asaph's Psalms differ entirely from those of David. In the present one there is no hint or trace of the personal feeling of the singer. It is altogether objective. God, and His holiness and judgments, are the only things that are seen or thought of by him. It is highly probable that this Psalm, from its impressive and evangelic character, was one of those employed by Hezekiah to stir up the people to his work of reformation, (2 Chron. xxix. 30) ; and that therefore it is found, where it now stands, in that collection of Psalms which has been supposed to have been made by him.

PSALM li. *Miserere mei, Deus.*

FOR THE COMMINATION SERVICE, THE FOURTH
PENITENTIAL PSALM.

1. HAVE mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness : according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences.

2. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness : and cleanse me from my sin.

The goodness of our God must indeed be great, or our sins which are so great could never gain His mercy. Many and great as our offences are, yet the multitude of His mercies is even greater. To Him can the offender therefore look, on Him can the sinner call, in trust that He Who alone can will wash him from his wickedness of heart, and make him clean from the pollutions of the sins he has done. He may weep, but grace alone can cleanse him ; he may repent, but almighty love alone can pardon.

3. For I acknowledge my faults : and my sin is ever before me.

When his sin is before the sinner as sin, naked and unveiled, he cannot bear it : its fearful and miserable truth compels him, as it were, to confession before his God. He must needs acknowledge his faults, when his sin comes thus before him. The justice of God and His holiness terrifies him less than the sight of the evil things he has done. Sad is it to need such sharp and bitter penitence ; but sadder far to need it and not to have it !

4. Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight : that Thou mightest be justified in Thy saying, and clear when Thou art judged.

It is God, our Father, and our Lord, and our King, Whom we have sinned against and despised. 'Sin is the transgression of the law,'—of His law. The laws, 'Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery,' and each other of the commandments, are but parts and branches of the first, 'I am the Lord thy God.' Our sins against right, our breaches of charity toward our neighbour, are also despisings of the holiness and righteousness of God. Wherever we have transgressed His law and opposed His will, there we are, and must be, deeply, utterly wrong; for His law and His will is utterly and eternally right. 'Yea, let God be true but every man a liar; as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged.'

5. Behold, I was shapen in wickedness : and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

6. But lo, Thou requirest truth in the inward parts : and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.

We are, albeit God's adopted, sinners, the children of sinners, born by nature into a world of sin. This is only too plain. There yet remains in each one of even the regenerated offspring of Adam a 'fault and corruption of nature,' which leads us from righteousness and inclines us to evil; and in each act of sin that we commit, can we see as in a mirror the whole foulness and corruption of the unregenerate heart. But if we be this, it is no less plain

on the other hand that our God is all-holy and all-true, and requires holiness and truth in us, and that not merely outwardly, but in the very soul and spirit. This does He make us understand by the grace of repentance, and so He teaches us a deeper knowledge of Himself as the true Lord not only of power and might, but of mercy and of goodness.

7. Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8. Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness : that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

Under the law, when one had touched a dead body he became unclean; and the law was that 'a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water of separation, and sprinkle it upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord.' If he was unclean who touched a dead body, how far more unclean must he be who has defiled his soul with sin? what need must he not have of that all-holy One to 'purge his conscience' from works of death, by the hyssop of His passion and humiliation, and the sprinkling of His most pre-

cious blood? In that fountain there is cleansing for all who repent them of their sins, however vile and guilty they may be. In it, 'though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;' yea, whiter, for no created whiteness can be compared with the purity and brightness of a soul pardoned by Christ, and sanctified through the sprinkling of His blood. There lie memories of love, and hopes of pardon, and promises of grace; there are raisings from falls, restorings from backslidings, supplyings for shortcomings, comfortings for broken spirits.

9. Turn Thy face from my sins : and put out all my misdeeds.

To feel sin keenly is a thing of good hope; for where there is a sense of pain, there there is a spark of life. With what life and grace we have still left us, must we implore our Father to turn His face from our sins, while He yet turns it not from us. We must implore Him again and again to put away our sins, so that not only may their wounds be healed, but that not even a scar be left. We are still to lay our guilt to heart, even though He gives us promises and earnestings of pardon, in order that fear and dislike of sin may penetrate our souls, and our repentance may be deep and true; for our sin only then is quite blotted out when we no longer sin.

10. Make me a clean heart, O God : and renew a right spirit within me.

11. Cast me not away from Thy presence : and take not Thy holy Spirit from me.

12. O give me the comfort of Thy help again : and stablish me with Thy free Spirit.

First the grace of repentance, then the grace of pardon, then the grace of holiness,—this is the order in which our merciful Father gives His mercies to the sinner. A clean heart is one of His highest graces, but it is not to be gained without an effort. If the garment which is but slightly stained is soon made white again, but that which has been deeply defiled and is become utterly foul, needs long care and many and continued cleansings to bring it back to its first purity ; no otherwise is it with the heart. He only Who made it can cleanse it. He Who breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and made man a living soul, only can renew the spirit He has made when it has become perverse and evil. To ask for pardon, and to ask not to be cast out of God's presence, are the same ; for each sin we do would cast us out from Him, as his disobedience cast Adam out of Paradise. To ask for pardon, and to ask that the Holy Spirit, Which once sanctified us among the elect, be not taken from us, are the same ; for each time we listen to the unclean spirit, we grieve and vex the Holy One. Well, therefore, does the Church teach us daily to cry, ' O God, make clean our hearts within us, And take not Thy Holy Spirit from us,' for as we sin daily, so have we need of daily pardon and grace. Very often should we pray to that Holy Ghost, the Cleanser of the unclean, the Comforter of the sorrowing, to come unto us, that we go not

from Him—to keep us, that we lose not Him. And to them who thus pray in earnestness and penitence He will restore the grace they have lost, and give the comfort that they want through the working of that mighty, and gracious, and bountiful Spirit, Who ‘strengtheneth such as do stand, and comforteth and helpeth the weak-hearted, and raiseth up them that fall.’

13. Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked : and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.

As David by his sins ‘had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,’ so was he by his repentance to convert them to His ways. He was to teach them to others, when he had learned himself their solemn, humbling lesson. As the fall of David has warned many a saint, so has his penitence converted many a sinner. And each one who has fallen through his own evil, and has been raised by God’s grace, should seek to teach others the way of truth which has been shewn to him. ‘When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren,’ is a charge not merely to St. Peter, but to every one on whom the name of Christ is named.

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou that art the God of my health : and my tongue shall sing of Thy righteousness.

15. Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord : and my mouth shall shew Thy praise.

If David besought God, when he was again able to approach Him as a pardoning God, that he would take from him the guilt of the slaughter of Uriah, so must we beseech Him to forgive us those wilful sins of ours which crucified the Lord. It was our guilt which nailed Him to the tree, and the Jews were but the instruments of our sins, as the Ammonites were the instruments of David's treachery and cruelty to his valiant men. But when our sins are put away, then can we sing thanksgivings for His righteous mercy. God shuts the mouth of the guilty, but opens that of the forgiven. After confession, and absolution, and prayer, can we fitly make us ready for praise, and draw near to our God with the words, 'O Lord, open Thou our lips; And our mouth shall shew forth Thy praise.' When He opens the sinner's mouth to speak His praise, it is a sure token that He has pardoned him.

16. For Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee : but Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings.

17. The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit : a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise.

David's sin was far beyond any sin-offering which could be offered by the law. No sacrifice of bulls or goats could be availing for its atonement. Then,

as now, a spirit troubled with its sins, a heart broken with the memory of its own vileness, and contrite with the sense of its disobedience and unholiness, was the sacrifice which He would accept in virtue of that one great Sacrifice which was offered on the Cross. ‘He despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful;’ nay, rather ‘with such sacrifices God is well pleased.’

18. O be favourable and gracious unto Sion : build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

19. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and oblations : then shall they offer young bullocks upon Thine altar.

How many bright and holy fancyings and good resolutions will a single deadly sin cast down ! David had hoped to adorn Sion and to build up the walls of the temple in Jerusalem ; but when his own guilt and vileness came plain before him, he could only, groaning, give up the doing of the work to God : I am not worthy to do it, but do not Thou let it go undone ! Oh, build Thou the walls, Who canst do all things ! There should that spotless sacrifice be presented, ‘the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world;’ and without those walls was He to be offered up ‘a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction’ for all the sins of all ; that within the walls of that better Jerusalem, of which the older city was the type, there might be brought continually before the Father

of mercy His own accepted sacrifices, even contrite hearts, and His chosen burnt-offerings, souls glowing with holy love, sanctified by that same altar on which His Son was laid, even the Cross.

The title of this Psalm gives the occasion on which David wrote it, "When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba," (2 Sam. xi., xii.) Verse 4 evidently refers to 2 Sam. xii. 9, and 13 to xii. 14. This Psalm of penitence appears to have been made by David after the thirty-eighth, and before the thirty-second. It holds a middle place between these, expressing neither the desolation and misery of the thirty-eighth, nor the assurance of pardon contained in the thirty-second. It was most probably adapted to the temple-service by Hezekiah; and, with the Psalm which precedes it, would be most applicable to the revival of religion which took place in his time, (2 Chron. xxix. xxx). It is one of the Psalms called penitential, and is appointed for the Communion Service on the First Day of Lent. Verses 10, 11, and 15, are used as versicles in the daily service of the Church.

PSALM lii. *Quid gloriaris?*

1. WHY boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant :
that thou canst do mischief ;

2. Whereas the goodness of God : endureth
yet daily ?

To have power is one of the greatest trials of our nature, though all seek after it ; to be able to do as we will is a most fearful thing ; for we are so much more likely to do what is wrong, and unjust, and tyrannical, than what is right. To exult in power to do wrong,—as Doeg the Edomite did, and Saul his master, when they slew Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub the priest, and fourscore and five of his brethren the priests, with their wives and their little children,—this is the very spirit of the prince of

darkness. Yet in spite of man's tyranny and cruelty God's goodness stands unchanged ; the one is for the day, the other for unending days.

3. Thy tongue imagineth wickedness : and with lies thou cuttest like a sharp razor.

4. Thou hast loved unrighteousness more than goodness : and to talk of lies more than righteousness.

5. Thou hast loved to speak all words that may do hurt : O thou false tongue.

In Doeg we see the set deliberate intention to act with treachery and cruelty. He not only gave Saul the information of David's visit to Ahimelech, and omitted in his false witness to say, how that Ahimelech was both ignorant of Saul's anger, and innocent of any act which could give him cause for revenging himself; but he also, when the other 'servants of the king would not' put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord, himself executed the miserable and unrighteous order of the blinded and furious king. He slew the priests of God first with his tongue, and after with his sword: and this he seems to have done readily and even wantonly, 'carrying tales to shed blood,' and having, doubtless, freed himself from restraint in his false witness and murder, by the thought that he was an Edomite and not of the seed of Israel. Herein is Doeg's crime a type of Judas, the treacherous and murderous apostle, and of all treachery and murder.

6. Therefore shall God destroy thee for

ever : He shall take thee, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living.

Such may for a while be above man's power : they may be able to boast that they can do what they will. But the Almighty God is able to deal with them after their deeds. He will take them, and bid them depart away from the scene of their crimes and sins unto the land of immortal despair and of eternal death. They shall be doomed to that burning dwelling where they shall cry in vain for a drop of water to cool the tongue which in life has imagined wickedness and loved to speak words of hurt.

7. The righteous also shall see this, and fear : and shall laugh him to scorn ;

8. Lo, this is the man that took not God for his strength : but trusted unto the multitude of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.

The judgments of God upon the false witnesses and the murderers shall fill the faithful, when they are opened before them, with holy fear at the righteousness of their Judge, and with holy scorn at the vain boasting of the wicked. They that have not strength in God are but wickedness and weakness. In the dying, despairing sinner, in the lost soul tortured in hopeless agony, they will scarce distinguish the proud and cruel being who was confident in his riches and in his power, and strong in his determined wickedness.

9. As for me, I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God : my trust is in the tender mercy of God for ever and ever.

Far better and far safer is it for the servant of God to be without much power and without great riches, if only he may dwell in peace within the walls of the Church of Christ, and may bring fruit to perfection, beneath the continual dew of his Saviour's blessing. Better is it, 'being a wild olive-tree, to be grafted in and partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree' of Israel here, in lowliness of mind and fear, and then in God's time to be transplanted to that higher temple which is filled with the mercy and the glory of our God for ever and ever.

10. I will always give thanks unto Thee for that Thou hast done : and I will hope in Thy Name, for Thy saints like it well.

For all that God does may we ever return Him thanks; for all His works are true. To them that do mischief He returns their own mischief and the fruits of it: to them that trust in His mercy He returns His mercy and the fruits of it. Therefore His redeemed on earth shall hope in His name while they abide here, and His saints in glory shall love it everlastingly and perfectly.

The occasion on which this Psalm was written is shewn by the title, "To the chief musician, a Maschil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, 'David is come to the house of Ahimelech.'" The narrative of Doeg's officious treachery and cruelty is given in 1 Sam. xxii. 9—19. Doeg was an Edomite, and the chief of Saul's herdsmen, (1 Sam. xxi. 7). It was pro-

ably written when David received the information from Abiathar, 20—22), who alone escaped from the slaughter of the priests at Nob. This slaughter of the priests, although they were certainly innocent of the alliance with David against Saul, which was imputed to them as their crime, was yet a fulfilment of that prophecy of punishment which had been pronounced against the house of Eli for the sins of Hophni and Phinehas, (1 Sam. ii. 27—36 ; iii. 11, 14).

Eveining Prayer.

PSALM liii. *Dixit insipiens.*

1. THE foolish body hath said in his heart :
There is no God.

2. Corrupt are they, and become abominable in their wickedness : there is none that doeth good.

3. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men : to see if there were any, that would understand, and seek after God.

4. But they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable : there is also none that doeth good, no not one.

5. Are not they without understanding that work wickedness : eating up my people as if they would eat bread? they have not called upon God.

6. They were afraid where no fear was : for God hath broken the bones of him that besieged thee ; thou hast put them to confusion, because God hath despised them.

Evil as men are, vile as they may have become,

they who trust in God need not fear them. On the side of the faithful there need be nothing but trust and hope; on the side of the perverse and the unbelievers, of those who, having been abominable in their evil doings have formed within themselves a habit of complete and perfect wickedness, there must be always fear and terror. The Almighty God is against them! His force, which establishes the universe, will crush them, and their strength, and their efforts, into utter nothingness and destruction. The least of God's saints shall put them to confusion at last, because the God Whom they have despised, and Whose being they have denied, has despised them and left them to themselves.

7. Oh, that the salvation were given unto Israel out of Sion : Oh, that the Lord would deliver His people out of captivity !

8. Then should Jacob rejoice : and Israel should be right glad.

To wait and to pray, this is the means by which salvation is gained; patience here worketh joy by-and-by; prayer will soon attain unto deliverance and be paid with gladness.

This, which is almost identical with Psalm xiv., is entitled, a Psalm of instruction "upon Mahalath." This is a hard word to explain. It has been said to mean "with a chorus." Another and more likely interpretation is "upon sickness," with allusion to the corruption and disease of man's nature which it describes. It has been sometimes supposed that Psalm xiv. was composed by David on the rebellion of Absalom, and again was corrected and slightly altered by him on the revolt of Sheba, the son of Bichri, (2 Sam. xx). The change of the word Lord for that of God in four cases, would indicate that this was

the form which had been adopted for the temple-worship, and which was restored to the public service under the direction of Hezekiah.

PSALM liv. *Deus, in nomine.*

FOR GOOD-FRIDAY.

1. SAVE me, O God, for Thy Name's sake : and avenge me in Thy strength.

2. Hear my prayer, O God : and hearken unto the words of my mouth.

3. For strangers are risen up against me : and tyrants, which have not God before their eyes, seek after my soul.

Not once only or twice have we to know and be sure that God is our help and safety. We have to be taught it again and again ; we have to turn to Him in prayer again and again, that He may save us for His own sake, not for ours, and that He may defend our cause in His own almightiness. The experience of David is but the experience of every faithful soul ; as the trials of David will too, in some degree, be the trials of every faithful soul. And all human experience, and all human trials, are summed up in the passion and the patience of the Crucified. David was resting for a little while 'in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strongholds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? Now therefore, O

king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down ; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.' So when the strangers, the Ziphites, were betraying him, and Saul, who was following his own tyrannical and darkened spirit, was seeking his life, prayer became his sole refuge, and the strength and justice of God was all the power he had.

4. Behold, God is my helper : the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

5. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies : destroy Thou them in Thy truth.

But that was enough, and more than enough. They who seek God will find that He is with them. He is a most sure and faithful upholder of the soul which is committed to His mercy. 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,' was the cry of the Son of God Himself. And this too David found, when 'Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain, and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul ; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land ; wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines.' The tyrant who was hunting after David's soul, had to haste and return lest his own throne and family should be destroyed ; it was shewn to him that the righteous

providence of God was not asleep, though his eyes had been blinded so as not to see it.

6. An offering of a free heart will I give Thee, and praise Thy Name, O Lord : because it is so comfortable.

7. For He hath delivered me out of all my trouble : and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

And in many a deliverance from trouble, not unlike this, can' the believer rejoice, as David rejoiced, giving his heart as a free-will offering to Him Who hath freely given to him both life and grace, and praising Him Who is not only the God of all consolation, but Whose Name is The Comforter. He has delivered them who trust in Him, and He will deliver ; He has executed justice upon the unjust, and He will do it yet again.

The title of the Psalm shews when it was composed. It is "to the chief musician on Neginoth, or the harps and instruments with strings, an instruction of David, when the Ziphim came and said to Saul, 'Doth not David hide himself with us?'" The inhabitants of Ziph twice betrayed David when he took refuge in the strongholds and the wilderness which was part of their territory, (1 Sam. xxiii. 19, and xxvi. 1). But it seems clear that the first occasion of their so doing was the one which called forth this Psalm ; for David's deliverance from his great danger, for which the last two verses express his gratitude, was due solely to the merciful providence of God in stopping Saul, his enemy, in his pursuit of him by an invasion of the Philistines, (xxiii. 27, 28). While on the second occasion Saul and David were reconciled, and parted with words of friendship which were for the time sincere, (1 Sam. xxvi). The wilderness of Ziph is on the south-east of Judæa, near the Dead Sea, and to the north of the wilderness of Maon. The danger and deliverance of David,

and his 'trust in God, are types of the passion and deliverance and trust of the Son of David; and therefore this Psalm is fitly chosen for Good-Friday.

PSALM lv. *Exaudi, Deus.*

1. HEAR my prayer, O God : and hide not Thyself from my petition.

2. Take heed unto me, and hear me : how I mourn in my prayer, and am vexed.

3. The enemy crieth so, and the ungodly cometh on so fast : for they are minded to do me some mischief; so maliciously are they set against me.

At one time the believer can pray in full assurance of faith; at another time he craves of his Father in heaven to hear him in his deep distress and perplexity. Like the apostle, he 'beseeches the Lord thrice' in the anguish of his heart; he comes before his God mourning and yet praying. The world seems to him only a scene of unending trials, life but a long temptation. The enemy of souls roars against him; the powers of evil seem joining their cunning and their might to cast him down. They are strong in malice, while he is but weak in faith.

4. My heart is disquieted within me : and the fear of death is fallen upon me.

5. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me : and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me.

The most miserable of perils is the being 'in perils among false brethren.' In disquiet and terror, as the love of a friend is a great and wonderful comfort, so is the treachery of a friend a most bitter and dreadful blow. Among all the fearful thoughts and horrible visions that came upon the Saviour in His sore amazement and agony in the garden, the knowledge of the treachery of Judas was one of the most dark and deadly, adding horror to the fear of death itself.

6. And I said, O that I had wings like a dove : for then would I flee away, and be at rest.

7. Lo, then would I get me away far off : and remain in the wilderness.

8. I would make haste to escape : because of the stormy wind and tempest.

LXX. I was waiting for God Who maketh me safe
From my weakness of mind, and from the tempest.

In this misery and doubt, when life is all dark with the shadow of death, and the best founded hopes of earth prove frail and treacherous, there will come a deep longing to flee away from here and to be at rest, to be borne aloft to the abode of peace and calm by the gentle power of the eternal and all-loving Spirit, as a dove that spreads her wings and flies swiftly from danger to her own safe nest. To get away from this scene of strife and sin, and to be far off from it, to be alone with Christ even though in the desert, to escape from the

noise and confusion, the evil stir of the world, the storms of temptation and the tempests of human passion, like the dove that maketh her nest in the clefts of the rock,—this is a wish we are tempted to indulge in our haste and fear. But if He Who is our Lord wills us to stay, if He has work for us to do, then must we await His time and His will, and trust in Him to deliver us from our own poor weakness and impatience, and from the danger that seems near.

9. Destroy their tongues, O Lord, and divide them : for I have spied unrighteousness and strife in the city.

10. Day and night they go about within the walls thereof : mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.

11. Wickedness is therein : deceit and guile go not out of their streets.

And so what must have been the depth of David's sorrow, when he knew of a certainty that Absalom his beloved son, and Ahithophel his trusted counsellor, had conspired not only to dethrone him, but to disgrace him and to kill him ! He could only turn to that God, Who of old had scattered the sinners who built upon the plain of Shinar, and Who had ' confounded their language that they might not understand one another's speech.' ' And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.'

This he might ask, not for his own sake only, but for his people's. Jerusalem, which had been once the peaceful seat of his government, was now changed to a place of wickedness and treachery, of rebellion and of crime. The watchmen on her battlements were violence and strife; mischief and sorrow had made it their abode; deceit and fraud paced through her streets, like constant dwellers; the Sion of God had become a Babel of confusion and sin.

12. For it is not an open enemy, that hath done me this dishonour : for then I could have borne it.

13. Neither was it mine adversary, that did magnify himself against me : for then peradventure I would have hid myself from him.

14. But it was even thou, my companion : my guide, and mine own familiar friend.

15. We took sweet counsel together : and walked in the house of God as friends.

It was not the Philistines or the Ammonites who had brought this shame and suffering upon him; that would have been bearable; for it was what he might expect from them. Nor was it Saul, his former persecutor, and the followers of his house, who had recovered their ancient power and had again attacked him; for in that case he would have hoped to baffle their violence as he had done before. Shimei of the house of Saul might indeed cast stones

and curse, but it was Absalom, the son for whom he had 'mourned every day,' whom he had received with a kiss of pardon, and whom he most deeply loved, and Ahithophel, whom he had honoured as a counsellor and guide, that had wrought that bitter disgrace and sudden ruin against him. And so in the betrayal and suffering of the Son of Man, it was not one of the Pharisees who hated Him, nor Pilate who despised Him, who was guide to them that took Jesus. It was an apostle of His own, it was one whom He had chosen, who 'knew the place' whither He resorted to pray, who had heard often His words of grace and truth, that 'betrayed the innocent blood' of the Lord of Life.

16. Let death come hastily upon them, and let them go down quick into hell : for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

Such as betray their Lord and King, as Ahithophel betrayed David, and Judas betrayed Christ, become utterly evil. Their feet leave traces as it were of wickedness, wherever they set them down. They are past ordinary chastisements ; they are beyond being visited with the visitation of all men ; death has a speedy claim upon them ; they are fit only for that sudden judgment of hasty and awful vengeance, which came upon the rebel Korah and his company in the desert, when 'the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up. They, and all that appertained unto them, went down alive into

the pit, and the earth closed upon them ; and they perished from among the congregation.'

17. As for me, I will call upon God : and the Lord shall save me.

18. In the evening, and morning, and at noon-day will I pray, and that instantly : and He shall hear my voice.

19. It is He that hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me : for there were many with me.

They who suffer like David must pray like David. Yea, rather, they who suffer in Christ and with Christ must pray in and with Him, and they shall be saved in Him and with Him, Who for us men and for our salvation died in the evening on the cross, and rose again in the morning of the third day, and ascended into heaven in the noon-day from the Mount of Olives. Three times in each day should each one who confesses Him 'pray and that instantly' unto that eternal Trinity, unto Whom the Son of God has brought us nigh by His passion, and resurrection, and ascension. That Sun of righteousness, Whose glory for a little while was darkened, but sprung forth again, and at last shone intense and mighty as the noon-day beams, will give the light of salvation to them that call to Him. He, like a mighty warrior who has conquered his own foes, will deliver the soul that seeks Him from the battles of this world of trials into His own abiding peace.

His grace, if it be with the believer, is like many and strong defenders on his side; it is sufficient and more than sufficient for him.

20. Yea, even God, that endureth for ever, shall hear me, and bring them down : for thou wilt not turn, nor fear God.

The same righteous and eternal God Who punished the builders of Babel and executed vengeance upon Korah, governs the world now : He hears the cry of them who call upon Him, and repays the unrepenting and the hardened.

21. He laid his hands upon such as be at peace with him : and he brake his covenant with them.

22. The words of his mouth were softer than butter, having war in his heart : his words were smother than oil, and yet they were very swords.

The treacherous dealer may for a moment gain his ends. He may injure them who have not injured him ; he may break the promise he has made both to God and to man ; he may disguise his malice with an appearance of friendship, like him who betrayed his Lord with a kiss ; he may use flattery as a weapon for temptation and for ruining souls ; but he cannot do so for long.

23. O cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall nourish thee : and shall not suffer the righteous to fall for ever.

The burden of fear and dread lies sore and weighty upon them who have suffered from the treachery of those whom they have trusted in, but let them cast it upon their righteous God, and He will make it light. He Who gives us each day our daily bread, will comfort each daily with our daily comfort, and sustain us each day with our daily grace.

24. And as for them : Thou, O God, shalt bring them into the pit of destruction.

25. The blood-thirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days : nevertheless, my trust shall be in Thee, O Lord.

He will not suffer them to fall who trust in Him ; but He Himself brings to the pit of destruction them who wilfully and without repentance despise His law. The blood-thirsty and deceitful have their days made short. Absalom perished by the hand of Joab in the wood of Ephraim. ‘ When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he arose, and gat him home to his house, and hanged himself, and died.’ Judas ‘ falling headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.’ All things, both providence and grace, teach us that hardened sin must perish, and that our safety lies in trusting in the will and in the love of God.

This Psalm was appointed for the temple-service. Its title is “ to the chief Musician, on Neginoth or the harps, a Maschil of David.” It was doubtless called forth by the cutting treachery and cruelty of Absalom and Ahithophel, (2 Sam. xv.) In the treachery used to David the Christian sees a type of the treachery used to the Saviour.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM lvi. *Miserere mei, Deus.*

1. BE merciful unto me, O God, for man goeth about to devour me : he is daily fighting, and troubling me.

2. Mine enemies are daily in hand to swallow me up : for they be many that fight against me, O Thou most Highest.

As David in the midst of the Philistines in Gath, when they watched him and endeavoured to accuse him before Achish their king, felt utterly desolate and alone, persecuted and driven from his own country by Saul and his fellow-countrymen, and allowed no rest or safety by the strangers to whom he had fled ; so was the Lord of Glory silent when both the people of Israel and the heathen were gathered together against Him, as many birds of prey around a timid dove. He appealed to God for mercy, for there was no mercy in man.

3. Nevertheless, though I am sometime afraid : yet put I my trust in Thee.

LXX. The many who war against me shall be made afraid :
But I will hope in Thee.

4. I will praise God, because of His word : I have put my trust in God, and will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

When fear comes to the believing soul then comes

trust: we must fear danger before we can have trust in a deliverer. When we have known and trusted in our Deliverer, then can we confess His love and mercy, then can we declare the firm truth of His promises; and having full confidence in His Almighty love we need no longer be concerned as to what any arm of flesh can do against us. Nay, if we have firm faith in His grace and truth, we need not fear even what we do against ourselves.

5. They daily mistake my words : all that they imagine is to do me evil.

6. They hold all together, and keep themselves close : and mark my steps, when they lay wait for my soul.

7. Shall they escape for their wickedness : Thou, O God, in Thy displeasure shalt cast them down.

Heb. In wickedness they hope for escape.

In anger cast Thou down the peoples.

The servant shall not be above his master. As the Philistines watched David, so did His enemies, both seen and unseen, watch the Son of God. They strove to entangle Him in His talk; they took counsel against Him to put Him to death; they came out against Him as against a thief. They took Him indeed, but they escaped not themselves: by their craft and cruelty in taking Him they cut off their own escape from the wrath of God, and cast themselves down to where they could not arise. If the Lord thus suffered, the disciple must be patient in

suffering too; there are misrepresentations and false accusings for each citizen of the heavenly country while he is sojourning in the strange land of this world; and under them he must be silent, as the Lamb of God was silent.

8. Thou tellest my flittings; put my tears into Thy bottle : are not these things noted in Thy book ?

LXX. I have related my life to Thee.
Lay up my tears before Thee,
As also in Thy promise.

Our temptations and our escapes, our wanderings and our flights, when like a frightened dove we would flee away and be at rest, He Who made us knows and recollects. He gathers up our tears of repentance and of sorrow as precious and dear unto Himself. The tears of penitents are the wine of the angels. They are quickly dried on earth, but He preserves them in heaven, to be for us as a wine of consolation in that day when all tears shall be wiped from off all faces. Our patience and our prayers, our trials and our good works, are alike recorded in the Book of Life in which the names of the elect are written.

9. Whensoever I call upon Thee, then shall mine enemies be put to flight : this I know; for God is on my side.

10. In God's word will I rejoice : in the Lord's word will I comfort me.

11. Yea, in God have I put my trust : I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

By prayer do we put to flight our enemies who are also the enemies of God. That God is love, we know ; that He loves us, we know ; and by appealing to His love do we become conquerors. I know that God is mine,—this is a weapon which will put to flight the Evil One. The word of promise becomes a word of assurance. In that which God has spoken there lie treasures of joy and untold consolation ; the soul becomes not only confident but bold and fearless, as it draws nearer and nearer to Him Who is love. What can evil men or evil angels do to them on whose side is God ?

12. Unto Thee, O God, will I pay my vows : unto Thee will I give thanks.

13. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and my feet from falling : that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

Therefore, though sorrowful and silent, and alone among strangers and foes, yet the believing soul can already be alway rejoicing before God, paying the vows it vowed in its trouble as being already delivered, thanking Him as having received all that it was craving for in the earnest of His love. A way is opened for its deliverance on earth ; before the face of its Father it is delivered already. His grace, Who is the Light of the world, saves the soul from the death of sin, and comforts the fainting spirit : His

grace strengthens them who stand, and leads our hopes and longings to Himself, Who alone can fill them: His grace sets us in the right way, that we may ever be advancing onward until we enter that high city which has 'no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'

"To the chief Musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath," (1 Sam. xxi. 14). The first part of this title presents great difficulties to the translator. The LXX render it "concerning the people who are far from the sanctuary, or from the saints." "The oppression of the banished people," and "the dove in the remote woods," are other renderings. The true translation seems to be "the dove silent among strangers." This may be either a figurative description of David himself, silent among the Philistines, and so typical of the Saviour; or it may be an indication of the tone or chant to which the Psalm was to be sung, which would be perhaps that of the preceding Psalm; with this title the reader may compare Ps. lv. 6, 7, and Ps. lxxiv. 19.

FOR EASTER-DAY.

PSALM lvii. *Miserere mei, Deus.*

1. BE merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in Thee : and under the shadow of Thy wings shall be my refuge, until this tyranny be over-past.

'Lord, have mercy upon us; Christ, have mercy upon us,'—these are the words which we must take into our mouths first and before all. Not once only, but twice must we cry for mercy; for not once only, but many times have we needed and shall yet need it. The rage and fierceness of our enemies

against us increases as our own strength grows faint beneath the fiery heat of temptation; but there is One Who would ever gather us together, as a hen gathereth her chicken under her wings, and to Him and the shelter of His mercy must we flee, until the burning hour of trial be overpast.

2. I will call unto the most high God : even unto the God that shall perform the cause which I have in hand.

3. He shall send from heaven : and save me from the reproof of him that would eat me up.

The whole creation from the beginning had groaned and craved for help; and man too cried for mercy and salvation unto Him Who dwelleth in the heavens. His prayer was not in vain : his Father in heaven heard and answered it. 'The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.' Thus did He deliver man from sin and from him who had the power of tempting him to sin, the prince of evil.

4. God shall send forth His mercy and truth : my soul is among lions.

5. And I lie even among the children of men, that are set on fire : whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

When man cried for mercy and longed for truth, He Who knew his need and poverty came unto him from the Father. The Merciful and the True was made like unto them to whom He came. He came

into the dangers among which they dwelt; his soul was exposed to the rage of that lion which devoured them; He was tempted and suffered for them: but as if this was not enough, He was tempted and suffered by them. It was man, inflamed by envy like a firebrand, that reviled Him Who came to teach him truth; it was man, inflamed by cruelty like a firebrand, that slew Him Who came to shew him mercy.

6. Set up Thyself, O God, above the heavens : and Thy glory above all the earth.

7. They have laid a net for my feet, and pressed down my soul : they have digged a pit before me, and are fallen into the midst of it themselves.

But what wonders of the power of the Son of God equal the wonders of His humility! Through pain, He conquered pain; through shame, He conquered shame; through death, He conquered death. He was buried, but He rose again: from the depth of the grave He ascended to the height of heaven; and His glory, Who had suffered on the cross, was made to fill the earth, and rose from earth to heaven, and above all heavens. Thus they who laid a snare to take Him ensnared themselves; and the grave, to which they doomed Him, became their own lot and doom.

8. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed : I will sing, and give praise.

9. Awake up, my glory ; awake, lute and harp : I myself will awake right early.

But in Christ, and with Christ, each believing heart is ready and fixed either to do or to suffer that which God shall will, and in both to praise Him. His heart was fixed to obey, to be humbled, to suffer, to bear agony, to die. He was ready to come down to earth and to ascend to heaven, to lie in the grave and to rise from the dead, to hang upon the cross and to sit on the right hand of God, to be the Shepherd of the sheep and the Lord of all. His whole life on earth was an all-perfect harmony. His resurrection, when His glory shone above the shadows of the cave of the tomb, and He came forth 'very early in the morning,' should therefore wake us up to praise and magnify Him with all the powers of our body and all the affections of our soul, with will, and word, and deed. His rising, Who is our glory, should wake us up to rise to newness of life with Him.

10. I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the people : and I will sing unto Thee among the nations.

11. For the greatness of Thy mercy reacheth unto the heavens : and Thy truth unto the clouds.

Not only the seed of Abraham, but all the nations of the earth were to be gathered together in the risen and ascended Lord. They were to praise God in Him and He in them. They were to teach others

that song of thanksgiving which He had taught them to learn. In Him Who died and rose had the fulness of God's mercy been set forth, reaching from heaven down to earth, and again reaching from earth up to heaven; and His truth had been made manifest to all under the face of heaven. God had sent forth His mercy and truth in the person of Him Who was the Merciful and the True, and they had not returned void to Him again, but had done that for which He had sent them forth, even the redemption of the world.

12. Set up Thyself, O God, above the heavens : and Thy glory above all the earth.

Therefore in heaven is the Son of Man exalted above angels, and archangels, and every name that is named, as King of kings and Lord of lords; and in all the earth is His glory known, the glory of love, the glory of mercy, the glory of salvation and of a Saviour.

"To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave," is the title of this Psalm. Al-taschith, which means "Destroy not," was at this time probably a sort of watchword of David, a saying which he had often in his mouth and in his mind to restrain him from acts of revenge and retaliation. The Chaldee paraphrase is "concerning great troubles, when David said Destroy not." It was most probably taken from the prayer of Moses to God, "O Lord, destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance, which Thou hast redeemed," (Deut. ix. 26). In the case of Saul sleeping in the cave when David cut off the skirt of his mantle, (1 Sam. xxiv.), and when David and Abishai entered by night into Saul's camp, David shewed that he had no wish to destroy Saul, and in the latter instance he used the words "Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guilt-

less?" (1 Sam. xxvi. 9). The cave in which David took refuge was the cave of Adullam, (1 Sam. xxii. 1,) to which he escaped immediately after he had left Gath. The several meanings which have been assigned to the word Michtam have been given in the note to Psalm xvi.: the most general are "a golden psalm," "a secret," and "an inscription." It is very possible that this latter meaning is the true one, and that David and his men, while hiding in deserts and caves, inscribed upon the rocks and cliffs of the places in which they took refuge, histories of their sufferings and wanderings, and also hymns and psalms which their master there composed. This was the custom of early Eastern people, and inscriptions are still continually being discovered written on the rocks. Job says, in allusion to this, "Oh that my words were now graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" (Job xix. 23, 24). The numerous and doubtless most important inscriptions which still remain in the Wady Mokatteb, in Arabia, and are traditionally ascribed to the children of Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness, appear to have been stanzas of Hebrew poetry referring to what they had gone through, and might have been called Michtam. These Psalms, thus engraved with iron upon the rock by David, might afterwards possibly have been set up in Jerusalem or in the temple in golden letters, when he ceased to be a wanderer and became a king.

PSALM lviii. *Si vere utique.*

1. ARE your minds set upon righteousness,
O ye congregation : and do ye judge the thing
that is right, O ye sons of men ?

2. Yea, ye imagine mischief in your heart
upon the earth : and your hands deal with
wickedness.

In men, apart from grace, and forgetting God, we can find no good thing. It is in vain to seek for righteousness among them, or to appeal to them for right judgment. It was the high-priest and the council of the Jews, the chosen and leading men, that sat in judgment upon the Lord; the same

council sat in judgment upon His martyr St. Stephen, and again upon His apostle St. Paul. Yet the minds of these, the council of the nation, were set, not upon righteousness and truth, but upon blood-guiltiness and cruelty. They sought for false witness against Jesus to put Him to death. If it were so with the chosen people when they acted in spite of grace, still more with the heathen nations of the earth who became persecutors without it. They only thought of malice and mischief; they only dealt with wickedness. Yet they were but the sons of men, and there was One higher than they.

3. The ungodly are froward, even from their mother's womb : as soon as they are born, they go astray, and speak lies.

4. They are as venomous as the poison of a serpent : even like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears ;

5. Which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer : charm he never so wisely.

But such come not at once to such a pitch of wickedness. They have given themselves up from their very birth to the corruption that is in them. They follow the evil part of their nature and indulge it, and check and deny all impulses to good. They love lies, and not truth, from their earliest years; and by their love for falsehood and indulgence in malice they mark themselves out early to be the children of the evil one, and of the old dragon's brood. It was the Pharisees and rulers whom the lips of

Truth itself had pronounced to be ‘serpents and a generation of vipers’ who refused to listen to the patient reasonings and holy rebukes of the martyr Stephen; but when he spoke before them of their resisting the Holy Ghost they ‘cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him.’

6. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouths; smite the jaw-bones of the lions, O Lord: let them fall away like water that runneth apace; and when they shoot their arrows let them be rooted out.

They are confident in their power, and they seem to themselves able to make wrong right. Like ravenous lions, they are ready to swallow up them who resist them. They must be left to God. He will deal with such. He breaks their insolence and confounds their pride. Before Him and His righteousness their power and malice sink away fast like water poured upon the desert sands. They cannot stand for a moment in contest with Him. They shoot their arrows against Him, they make their feeble attempt to resist Him, and they perish in making it.

7. Let them consume away like a snail, and be like the untimely fruit of a woman: and let them not see the sun.

8. Or ever your pots be made hot with

thorns : so let indignation vex him, even as a thing that is raw.

Heb. Before your pots feel the thorns with their raw or
sodden flesh,
He shall carry him off as by a storm.

‘ In His almighty and most righteous providence, to which they had vainly opposed themselves, the wicked, once so fierce and strong, become like all vile and contemptible things, like a snail which wastes away and dies as it crawls in the heat of day, or like an untimely birth which lives not to see the sun. All their schemes and contrivings shall be like the plan of a wayfarer in the wilderness who is preparing to make ready his repast with the lighted thorns which he has collected, when, before the vessel in which he has placed it can feel the heat from their flames, the storm of the desert falls upon him and destroys at once his labour and his life. Thus does the indignation of God confound the schemings of the sinners who oppose Him.

9. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance : he shall wash his footsteps in the blood of the ungodly.

10. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous : doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth.

The righteous cannot but rejoice when he sees the justice of God thus magnified. He may grieve over *the wrong-doers*, but he cannot but be glad that

right is done. The malicious shall at last be brought down before the patient. They who have suffered innocently shall at last be avenged on the murderers and false-witnesses. Saul, who had long persecuted David, was at length slain on the mountains of Gilboa, and lay dead before him whom he had unjustly treated. Ahab and Jezebel by the most cruel and wicked means condemned the innocent Naboth to death; but at length the vengeance of the outraged righteousness of God made itself clear, and in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, murdered in his innocence, did the dogs lick the blood of Ahab who guiltily murdered him. These things are lessons to the ungodly. They cannot help but notice them; and when they notice them they cannot help but confess that the right-doing are not and cannot be as the wicked, that there is most certainly and assuredly a righteous and almighty Judge Who governeth the earth.

This Michtam of David bears also the motto of "Destroy not." It was written most probably during his persecution by Saul, perhaps after he had spared his life the second time, and yet was compelled to retire again to Gath, (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). This Psalm was written, as St. Athanasius says, for the confusion of hypocrites and proud dealers.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM lix. *Eripe me de inimicis.*

1. DELIVER me from mine enemies, O God : defend me from them that rise up against me.

2. O deliver me from the wicked doers : and save me from the blood-thirsty men.

God is the true deliverer, God is the true defender, God is the only Saviour. They who hate the right-doing, and in their wickedness and cruelty attack them, may well fear the just judgment of Him Who is perfect justice. And they who suffer from unjust oppression may most safely commit themselves and their defence to Him.

3. For lo, they lie waiting for my soul : the mighty men are gathered against me, without any offence or fault of me, O Lord.

4. They run and prepare themselves without my fault : arise Thou therefore to help me, and behold.

LXX. I have run and have been upright without iniquity.

Against those who are crafty in their wickedness and strong in their cruelty, the only strength which the righteous can have is innocence. He that has a conscience void of offence can turn to God as a deliverer from the rage of man. Saul's messengers watched round David's house, and he had no help but in God. God is the Judge Who seeth all. Men may make haste to contrive plots and to execute violence against those who have done them no wrong, but the eternal God beholds their doings.

5. Stand up, O Lord God of hosts, Thou

God of Israel, to visit all the heathen : and be not merciful unto them that offend of malicious wickedness.

6. They go to and fro in the evening : they grin like a dog, and run about through the city.

They who have despised God as a most merciful Father, shall find Him a most righteous Judge, Who will in His justice visit all the peoples of the world. He will not be merciful to those that go on wilfully in their offences and are malicious in their wickedness. It may be that they who have gone on long in hardened sin, may at last, when the evening of life and the shadows and terrors of death come upon them, wish to return and repent. They will seek to enter within the gates of the eternal city. [It will be then too late ; the night will be upon them, when none can work ; they will go to and fro and cry for grace in vain ; they shall seek for Him Whom they have despised, and shall not find Him. There shall in no wise enter into that city anything that defileth.] Like dogs shut out from the holy place and famishing with hunger, so shall they wander aimless and hopeless in that outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

7. Behold, they speak with their mouth, and swords are in their lips : for who doth hear ?

8. But Thou, O Lord, shalt have them in

derision : and Thou shalt laugh all the heathen to scorn.

For awhile they seem to themselves safe. They begin their persecutions with hard speeches, and falsehoods, and blasphemies, which cut the soul of the innocent like a sword ; and they feel sure that no one who can chastise them hears or takes note of their evil sayings. But yet for all their wicked confidence God hears and marks them. He sees already their cruelty turned upon themselves, their falsehoods destroying themselves, their mockery of others covering themselves with scorn.

9. My strength will I ascribe unto Thee : for Thou art the God of my refuge.

Weak in himself, the believer is yet strong in God. Trial shews him both his weakness, which is his own, and his strength, which is his Lord's ; and so is he taught to give glory to Him with Whom he takes refuge until the tyranny of the ungodly is overpast.

10. God sheweth me His goodness plentifully : and God shall let me see my desire upon my enemies.

11. Slay them not, lest my people forget it : but scatter them abroad among the people, and put them down, O Lord, our defence.

12. For the sin of their mouth, and for the

words of their lips, they shall be taken in their pride : and why ? their preaching is of cursing and lies.

13. Consume them in Thy wrath, consume them, that they may perish : and know that it is God that ruleth in Jacob, and unto the ends of the world.

The goodness of the Eternal is equally shewn in His defending the innocent and in punishing the guilty. To them that love Him He gives the fulness of mercy and of grace ; while He makes them that hate Him, who are the enemies of both God and man, a fearful and lasting example of His justice and of His wrath against sin. His justice is slow, but it is very certain. The Jews who rejected the Christ, and asked for a murderer, were not slain at once by the twelve legions of angels, whom the Son of God might have called from heaven to revenge Him on His enemies ; but like him who slew his brother, they became ‘ fugitives and vagabonds,’ and for their sins were ‘ scattered among all people from the one end of the earth even to the other,’ to find no ease and no rest, to have ‘ a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.’ They deliberately rejected life, they deliberately asked that the blood of the Holy One might be on themselves and their children, and their impious prayer was heard ; and they became ‘ an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all the nations whither the Lord led them.’ Thus ‘ the kingdom of God

was taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.'

14. And in the evening they will return: grin like a dog, and will go about the city.

15. They will run here and there for meat: and grudge if they be not satisfied.

Their lot is the lot of all who disbelieve—darkness and gloom, anguish of heart and wandering of spirit, wants and longings which they cannot supply to themselves, and hunger for the food of life, which none but He Whom they have cast off from themselves can satisfy. They have broken loose from a loving Lord, and they are left to prowl in the darkness they have chosen. The hunger of the dog shall be their plague, as the ravenousness had before been their sin.

16. As for me, I will sing of Thy power, and will praise Thy mercy betimes in the morning: for Thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

17. Unto Thee, O my strength, will I sing: for Thou, O God, art my refuge, and my merciful God.

Sorrow in the evening darkness is the doom of the evil and the faithless. Praise in the morning light is the portion of the servant of God. The grave is for the one, the resurrection for the other, by His eternal decree Who succours and defends His own elect through the long and wearying day of

this mortal life. They who have made their God their strength and their confidence here, shall sing praises of everlasting melody before His eternal throne for the mercy which He has granted to them, and the refuge they have found.

This is a Michtam of David, with the motto, "Destroy not." The title ascribes it to the time "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him," (1 Sam. xix. 11). From this danger he escaped by the aid of Michal his wife, and fled to Samuel at Ramah. Verses 3 and 14, 15, have seemed to some interpreters to contain a reference to the messengers of Saul who watched round David's house, like dogs hungering for food; but the Psalm is rather to be referred to the wicked and unbelieving generally, (compare Phil. iii. 2, Rev. xxii. 15.) Verse 11 has been considered by the Fathers to apply to the Jews, who were dispersed among all nations for their rejection of Christ their king.

PSALM lx. *Deus, repulisti nos.*

1. O GOD, Thou hast cast us out, and scattered us abroad : Thou hast also been displeased ; O turn Thee unto us again.

2. Thou hast moved the land, and divided it : heal the sores thereof, for it shaketh.

3. Thou hast shewed Thy people heavy things : Thou hast given us a drink of deadly wine.

The course of God's dealings varies from time to time with His Church and people. Sometimes He tries them ; He leaves them to themselves ; and when they become scattered and broken, and they see that their power and union was not in themselves, but in Him. Sometimes He is displeased

with their presumption or their carelessness, and withdraws from them awhile; and then at once dismay and trembling come upon them. He shakes the hopes and trust of earth, as a land is shaken by an earthquake. They whom He rebukes are overwhelmed and stunned, as they who have been visited with heavy misfortunes; they are helpless and perplexed, like men intoxicated with wine. Thus He moves them to repentance, and then turns to them and heals their sins; for they were unworthy to be healed if they had not been moved.

4. Thou hast given a token for such as fear Thee : that they may triumph because of the truth.

Heb. Thou hast given to them who fear Thee a banner
To lift up because of the truth.

LXX. Thou hast given to them who fear Thee a sign
To flee from the face of the bow.

5. Therefore were Thy beloved delivered :
help me with Thy right hand, and hear me.

To those that have acknowledged His chastisements and have repented themselves of their faults, and returned to His fear, He gives a most certain sign of help; He spreads a banner over them to which they may rally, and under which they may march to triumph, even the banner of His love. He loves them, therefore are they delivered. They are His chosen, therefore does He help them with *His right hand*, and hear them when they pray.

For His election of His people, instead of making it impossible for them to sin, makes only their presumption or their disobedience stand out the plainer, and makes too His mercy and patience to shine the clearer.

6. God hath spoken in His holiness, I will rejoice, and divide Sichem : and mete out the valley of Succoth.

7. Gilead is mine, and Manasses is mine : Ephraim also is the strength of my head ; Judah is my lawgiver ;

God speaks in Christ. The holy One when He came spake not His own words but those of the Father Who sent Him. In Him Whose teaching is truth, and Whose words are love, can His Church rejoicingly undertake the work which she is pledged underneath His banner to fulfil. As David of old formed his territories, on one side of the Jordan and on the other, into different divisions, such as Sichem and Succoth, so does the Church mark out and divide into their allotted stations the people given to her care. As the Israelite could rejoice in those provinces and tribes on the east and on the west, which made up his nation, such as Gilead and Manasseh ; and mentioned with honour those which took the lead in government and in war, Ephraim as the body-guard, but Judah as the sovereign—‘ For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler ; but the birthright was Joseph’s ;’—so does the Church ~~number the nations~~

and the kingdoms that make up the whole body of the faithful, and glories not in them but in Him Who is her Lawgiver and Chief Ruler, Who has given her to inherit them; and so does she see that it is only when the east and the west, when Gilead and Ephraim, are joined together in perfect unity, under the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah,' that she can hope to go forth in perfect might conquering and to conquer.

8. Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe : Philistia, be thou glad of me.

Heb. Over Philistia give a shout of triumph for me.

LXX. Moab is the chaldron of my hope.

Over Idumea will I stretch out my shoe.

Foreign peoples have been subjected to me.

And there are other nations as yet lying in darkness and ignorance, and not made subject to the true David, the Son of Man; and these the Church has to bring as servants and as captives to the obedience of His word. Like the servants in the land of Judah used to wait upon their lords, one carrying the water to pour upon his hands, and another unloosing his shoes from his feet and bearing them after him, so must the heathen who know not God be brought to the cleansing water of baptism, and to the service and obedient following of that Lord of all, 'Whose service is perfect freedom.'

9. Who will lead me into the strong city :
who will bring me into Edom ?

10. Hast not Thou cast us out, O God : wilt not Thou, O God, go out with our hosts ?

But who can do this ? who can thus convert the stubborn and hardened nations of the earth, who are strong in their long idolatries and iniquities, who are difficult to approach, and fortified like Petra in the mighty rock of self-will and unbelief ? The efforts of the Church and the means of the Church are of no avail, unless the Almighty Spirit be with them and on them. If Christ be with her, according to His promise, then she is no longer weak, but ‘mighty to the casting down of strongholds.’

11. O be Thou our help in trouble : for vain is the help of man.

12. Through God will we do great acts : for it is He that shall tread down our enemies.

Man’s help is valueless, unless God’s help be with him first. If He be with His people, then whatever labours may lie before them, whatever battles be to be fought, whatever conquests to be made, they ‘can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth them.’ If their King be indeed at their head, then can they extend His kingdom. In Him ‘Israel shall do valiantly ;’ they have confidence, not in themselves, but in Him Whose they are, for He will subdue those that resist them before them, while they shall seem to have achieved the victory.

This Psalm is “a Michtam of David to teach,” that is, perhaps, to be taught to soldiers going to battle as a war song, “upon the lily of the testimony,” which may be “something lovely taken from the Law of Moses,” or may be the name of a particular tune or chant, or may be a six-stringed instrument used in the tabernacle service ; for each of these are conjectures of commentators. The LXX translate it as the xlvth. Psalm, “for them who shall be changed.” The remainder of the title is, “when he had conquered the Syrians of Mesopotamia and the Syrians of Zobah, and Joab had returned and had slain twelve thousand men of Edom in the valley of salt.” For these battles of David, see 2 Sam. viii. and 1 Chron. xviii. From comparing these two records it would seem that Joab and Abishai were generals under David in this war, in which he subdued Hadadezer, the king of the Syrians, and made them tributary ; “and David gat him a name when he returned from smiting the Syrians and Edomites (1 Chron. xviii. 12) in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men. And he put garrisons in Edom ; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all those of Edom became David’s servants ; and the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went.” (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14.) The valley of salt is at the southern part of the Dead Sea, under a remarkable mountain of mineral salt, in some places as high as 150 feet. The latter part of this Psalm is the same with the latter part of Psalm cviii. ; but the opening of that Psalm is triumphant and joyous, while this commences with penitence and humility. It may therefore be reasonably supposed that this Psalm formed the battle-song of David’s soldiers when they were marching on their expedition, and before they had engaged in battle ; while Psalm cviii. was their song of thanksgiving when they returned successful from their campaign.

PSALM lxi. *Exaudi Deus.*

1. HEAR my crying, O God : give ear unto my prayer.

2. From the ends of the earth will I call upon Thee : when my heart is in heaviness.

Again and again do we need to know that prayer is our only sure resource in trouble. All the dullness of our own nature, all the craft of the evil one,

aim at making us forget this most needful help. God wills that He should be prayed to; He loves that He should be entreated, and that not for His sake, but for ours. And therefore from this earth, so far beneath the heaven, from this country, so distant from the throne of God, must we cry aloud, not once only or twice, but unceasingly, unto Him Whose title is, 'He Who heareth prayer.' Especially when the soul is cast down and the heart is sad must we call upon God; for silence then will but increase our misery, and the very coming to Him with prayer will often prove the very relief we are groaning for.

3. O set me up upon the rock that is higher than I : for Thou hast been my hope, and a strong tower for me against the enemy.

He will take us out of the sea of troubles which threatens to swallow us up, and will set us safe upon the eternal Rock to Whom without His grace we could not reach. In Him is the hope of glory; in Him is present safety and defence against all hurtful and destroying foes.

4. I will dwell in Thy tabernacle for ever : and my trust shall be under the covering of Thy wings.

Through His grace shall 'such as should be saved' be led to dwell within the shelter of His Church; they shall find therein comfort and refreshing through all the ages of time; and they shall

pass one by one from the tabernacle of sojourning here to abide in the triumphal courts of His rest above for the ages of eternity. He longeth to gather all, if they will only come to Him, beneath the shadow of His cross, 'even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.'

5. For Thou, O Lord, hast heard my desires : and hast given an heritage unto those that fear Thy Name.

6. Thou shalt grant the King a long life : that his years may endure throughout all generations.

Let us but call, and He will most surely hear ; let us but pray, and He will not fail to answer, and to give us the things which belong unto our peace. He will confirm them in the inheritance of His heavenly kingdom who fear Him and keep His law. Yea, the subjects of the heavenly King shall share in their Lord's eternity. 'Because He lives they shall live also.' The years of His rule shall be continued when the earth shall have passed away and the heavens shall have faded. He is the 'King eternal and immortal,' and they who are His people shall be like Him when they serve Him in His kingdom of glory.

7. He shall dwell before God for ever : O prepare Thy loving mercy and faithfulness, that they may preserve him.

LXX. He shall abide to eternity before God.

Who shall search out His mercy and truth ?

8. So will I alway sing praise unto Thy Name : that I may daily perform my vows.

They shall dwell before God for ever in Him, when all things shall be subdued unto Him and all enemies are cast beneath His throne. Upon Him infinite mercy and unsearchable truth are waiting as perpetual guards, as never-ceasing attendants ; and they who wait upon the King shall also preserve the people from danger and from fear. Therefore in Him are His elect preserved 'to see His face for ever and ever,' and to praise Him for that He hath done for them through all the days of eternity.

This Psalm was "upon Neginah;" that is, it was to be sung to a single harp in the temple-service. It was probably written at Mahanaim, beyond Jordan, during the time of Absalom's rebellion.

Morning Prayer.

PSALM lxii. *Nonne Deo ?*

1. My soul truly waiteth still upon God : for of Him cometh my salvation.

Heb. Only to God is my soul silent.

2. He verily is my strength and my salvation : He is my defence, so that I shall not greatly fall.

Faith must grow if it be alive. It feels ever more and more the reality and the certainty of that salvation for which it waits, and it will rest in patience and in silence expecting Him in His own good time. He is to the faithful soul all and every thing ; and

His names and attributes are each, as it were, a shield with which it can beat back the fiery darts of trial, and stand unwounded and undismayed. In Him Who now strengthens us with grace, that we fall not into deep and deadly sin, we see with the eye of hope Him Who shall crown us with salvation hereafter.

3. How long will ye imagine mischief against every man : ye shall be slain all the sort of you ; yea, as a tottering wall shall ye be, and like a broken hedge.

Heb. Ye do all act murderously,
As against a tottering wall,
A rampart which is smitten down.

The contrivers of mischief against their brethren cannot fail to meet with their reward. Sin and death, those strong and unseen foes, shall be but for a little while, they shall be destroyed at last ; and can the weaker and feebler enemies of truth and righteousness escape ? Death is the doom of sin ;—‘ the soul that sinneth it shall die.’ Fallen man is of himself without strength and without defence against his murderous foes : his soul is like a besieged city which is ready to be subdued. Sin has made many and wide breaches in it. But they who assault him and contrive his utter ruin shall themselves meet with the doom which they contrived for him.

4. Their device is only how to put him out whom God will exalt : their delight is in lies ; they give good words with their mouth, but curse with their heart.

And what are the instruments of them who seek to destroy the souls which Christ died to save? They are those of their tempter and their master, —lyings and hypocrisy. They have a pleasure in what is false; they willingly deceive and ensnare by speaking good and meaning evil. They bless with their lips, but blaspheme with their lives.

5. Nevertheless, my soul, wait thou still upon God : for my hope is in Him.

Heb. Only to God, my soul, be thou silent.

6. He truly is my strength and my salvation : He is my defence, so that I shall not fall.

7. In God is my health, and my glory : the rock of my might, and in God is my trust.

All that faith has taught that God will be to us, experience shews us that He is. 'The Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for Him.' All that He has been He most truly ever will be, and more than all. He gives the healthful Spirit of His grace; He gives the riches of eternal glory. Trust we in Him, and He will be a rock of might which nothing of this world's power can ever shake.

8. O put your trust in Him alway, ye people : pour out your hearts before Him, for God is our hope.

Each soul can say, He is 'my health and my glory,' and yet can at the same time bid others also

to trust in Him as theirs. He is not gracious one only, merciful to one only, but to all. hearts may be poured out before Him in confession in prayer, in love, and the thoughts of each, as they empty themselves of earthly confidences, will be seen and accepted by Him Who poured out His grace upon all flesh. Each one by himself may say, 'God is my hope;' each one may say to them that pour out their hearts unto Him, 'God is your hope;' each one may say in union with the elect of God, 'God is our hope.'

9. As for the children of men, they are but vanity : the children of men are deceitful upon the weights, they are altogether lighter than vanity itself.

Man that is born of a woman is but in himself a vain and feeble thing. Whether his condition be high or low, he is alike emptiness and vanity. His power, his prosperity, his riches, his wisdom, his enjoyments, if they be weighed in the just balance of a thoughtful and considering mind, are altogether false and light in weight; there is *Tekel* written upon them, when they seemed greatest and fairest. Man himself is but vanity, and let the wisdom of the flesh, the earthly hopes and worldly desires which some are wholly taken up, be weighed against truth, holiness, and eternal life, and they will be found 'as the small dust of the balance,' even lighter than vanity, and emptier than emptiness.

10. O trust not in wrong and robbery, g

not yourselves unto vanity : if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

All things then call upon each living thinking soul to turn away from the desire of the passing things of time. They often cannot be gotten without sin and wrong; they are not worthy that we should set our hearts upon them; still less are they worthy that we should barter our souls for them. Why should we perish for that which perisheth? Why should we narrow our hearts to set them upon the sordid riches of time, be they never so much increased, when we might enlarge them to receive the infinite treasure of eternity?

11. God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same : that power belongeth unto God ;

12. And that Thou, Lord, art merciful : for Thou rewardest every man according to his work.

But this one thing hath God clearly spoken, proclaiming it by His providence, and revealing it in His word, that the children of men may hear and know its truth,—‘ God is powerful, and God is merciful.’ He is mighty and able to judge, He is merciful and willing to pardon. His Almighty justice and His infinite mercy both are shewn in His judgments, for that He rewards every man according to his works. This one fact has He told us by His Holy Spirit in His holy word, in the old covenant

and in the new covenant, in the law and in the gospel. To know it is the truest knowledge, to act upon it in our lives is the highest wisdom.

This Psalm is by David, and inscribed "to the Chief Musician over Jeduthun," (compare the title of Ps. xxxix. and 1 Chron. xxv. 3). It was possibly written with the recollection of Absalom's rebellion fresh in the royal prophet's mind.

PSALM lxiii. *Deus, Deus meus.*

1. O God, Thou art my God : early will I seek Thee.

The soul that has once found its all in God, that has said once and for ever, 'O God, Thou art my God,' seeks ever for Him in Whom its whole rest and happiness must ever be. Early in the morning of each day its first waking thought rises with a prayer upwards to where its risen Saviour is. Early in youth, in the morning of this mortal life, the soul that is God's will seek Him. Early in the morning of the last great day each one of the redeemed shall rise, no longer to seek, but to find their Lord Whom they have loved.

2. My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh also longeth after Thee : in a barren and dry land where no water is.

In Him is all love, all holiness, all wisdom, all innocence; and therefore for Him do all our wishes, and hopes, and feelings long, and in Him only can they be satisfied and rest. In the spiritual man, both the soul and the flesh alike thirst after God,—alike long 'to depart, and to be with Christ, which

is far better,'—alike grow weary, sad, and faint, in the barren pathless parched up wilderness of this present evil world, which of itself has no fountain in itself of the waters of life, and on which the dews of grace fall so often, only to be lost and wasted and dried away.

3. Thus have I looked for Thee in holiness : that I might behold Thy power and glory.

4. For Thy loving-kindness is better than the life itself : my lips shall praise Thee.

It is in holiness and purity only that we can hope to see Him Whom our souls long for. They are the doors into the inner sanctuary, where power and glory, like the two cherubims looking toward the one mercy-seat, abide eternally in His Almighty presence. The soul that truly lives must truly love Him, for His love is life, and more than life; the soul that truly loves Him will be ever with Him, for love will make us dwell where that which we love is. If the heart loves Him truly, the lips will praise Him rightly, 'for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.'

5. As long as I live will I magnify Thee on this manner : and lift up my hands in Thy Name.

6. My soul shall be satisfied, even as it were with marrow and fatness : when my mouth praiseth Thee with joyful lips.

This mortal life is too short for the loving soul to shew forth its love to that God Who is love; the everlasting life after death will only be enough for that transporting confession and unceasing acknowledgement of love. Yet filled with His love now and here, let us ever lift up holy hands before Him, lift them up to put away from us evil works, lift them up to do good works to His glory, and lift them up to praise His holy Name. And so doing shall the soul be refreshed and satisfied, even in the barren land, and the wilderness where no water is. It shall be filled with His fulness, and enriched with His riches; its prayer shall be changed to praise. While we pray we desire and thirst; when thirst ceases and we are satisfied, prayer passes away, and we betake ourselves to words of joy and praise.

7. Have I not remembered Thee in my bed : and thought upon Thee when I was waking ?

Heb. I meditate on Thee in the night-watches.

LXX. In the dawns did I meditate on Thee.

8. Because Thou hast been. my helper : therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.

Not only in the morning, but before the morning, do the thoughts of the loving soul rise to God. In the stillness of the night and in the rest from toil, His love shines equally clear and bright, as in the beauty and the freshness of the dawn. In the silence of the night-watches, when the soul wakes to its God

alone, it feels still more His presence helping and sustaining it; it sees still plainer the height of His love above, and the depth of His love beneath. It knows its own weakness and littleness, and therefore does it rejoice to be covered beneath the shadow of His fostering wings.

9. My soul hangeth upon Thee : Thy right hand hath upholden me.

‘Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?’—This is written not of the Church only, and of Christ, but also of each soul in the Church that loves its Lord, and is longing to stay itself upon His guiding arm, and to come with Him up from this wilderness of earthly things. Trust we to Him, lean we securely upon Him; for surely He Whose right hand upholds earth and heaven can support and bear up such small things of dust as we are!

10. These also that seek the hurt of my soul : they shall go under the earth.

11. Let them fall upon the edge of the sword : that they may be a portion for foxes.

Heb. They are given to the edge of the sword;
They become the prey of the jackals.

The love of God not only consoles, and satisfies, and transports the soul, but it drives away and destroys its enemies. No foul desires or earthly longings can remain where the love of the All-holy has taken up its abode. They are cast out and destroyed by ‘the sword of God’s excellency,’ like

enemies slain by a conqueror, whose souls are consigned to the darkness of the unseen world, while their mangled bodies are left unburied, to be the prey of the wild beasts that prowl by night for food.

12. But the King shall rejoice in God ; all they also that swear by Him shall be commended : for the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

The glory of the Son is one with the glory of the Father ; the love of the Son is one with the love of the Father. The heart that loves will follow its King with willing obedience, and for it Christ in God will be all in all. His Name Who is King of kings shall be ever in the mouths of His people ; in His truth shall they be true. The mouth of him who 'was a liar from the beginning' shall be stopped : the mouth of the insatiable grave shall be stopped. And all opposers of His truth, all rebels against His righteousness, shall be silenced and put to rebuke for ever.

This is "A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judæa," or, as the LXX gives it, "of Idumæa." This wilderness of Judæa was on the east of the tribe of Judah, along the side of the Dead Sea. David took refuge in it when he was fleeing from Saul, and also again he passed through it during the rebellion of Absalom. It was probably in his earlier life that this Psalm was written, the thought of which was suggested to him by the parching waste around him, in that "barren and dry land where no water was."

PSALM lxiv. *Exaudi, Deus.*

1. HEAR my voice, O God, in my prayer :
preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

God will ever hear the prayer of His elect; but He hears them then most especially when the cross is laid upon them, and they are compelled to bear it with their Lord. He will preserve them, for their enemy is also His.

2. Hide me from the gathering together of the froward : and from the insurrection of wicked doers ;

3. Who have whet their tongue like a sword : and shoot out their arrows, even bitter words ;

LXX. They have bent their bow, a bitter action.

4. That they may privily shoot at him that is perfect : suddenly do they hit him, and fear not.

The desires of the wicked are ever the same, the character of their doings does not change. They join themselves together to frighten or to persecute the believing, even as they joined together and made a tumult that they might crucify the Saviour. They use fierce and violent threatenings to strike down those who resist them, as with a sword; or they employ slanders, and falsehoods, and blasphemies, to injure the unoffending, like a robber hid in ambush who shoots out his arrows without exposing himself.

5. They encourage themselves in mischief : and commune among themselves how they may lay snares, and say, that no man shall see them.

6. They imagine wickedness, and practise it :

that they keep secret among themselves, every man in the deep of his heart.

As David's enemies when they accused him to Saul, as the Pharisees when they brought Him Who was perfect before Pilate, so do the wicked always encourage one another in wrong-doing. They think over what is evil, and then they practise it. They do nothing openly and honestly, not even in gratifying their malice; but they think to hide their wickedness by hypocrisy, and to keep those vile and shameful motives from which they act, hidden from others, and even from themselves.

7. But God shall suddenly shoot at them with a swift arrow : that they shall be wounded.

LXX. And God shall be exalted.

Their blows have been made an infant's weapon.

8. Yea, their own tongues shall make them fall : insomuch that whoso seeth them shall laugh them to scorn.

They have forgotten that they must with God's help slay sin, or sin will slay them. They have prepared their arrows of bitter words and have shot them from their ambush: but God has also prepared His of swift and righteous judgment, and will suddenly shoot it upon them, to their dismay and destruction; and their efforts, compared with His might, shall be but as the weapons of a child. Their own malicious tongues, which they used for the destruction of others, shall turn to their own destruc-

tion, and they shall be condemned and perish by their own words, even as Saul on Gilboa fell on his own sword. So the scorers shall come to be scorned, and they, who mocked at justice and at judgment, shall be given up to shame and everlasting contempt. What self-deceiving misery was theirs, who called for the Redeemer's blood to be upon them and their children, not to save them, but to ruin them; not as an atonement, but as a curse!

9. And all men that see it shall say, This hath God done : for they shall perceive that it is His work.

Every act of sin is a fearful thing when seen by the light of grace; above all, every act of wilful and planned sin. And they who see how sinners are punished, and how their sin, in spite of plannings and cunning, is confounded and comes to nothing, cannot but recognise God's unerring providence and confess His righteous government.

10. 'The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord, and put his trust in Him : and all they that are true of heart shall be glad.

In that government the righteous rejoices, while the sinner is confounded. In the display of that government lies God's answer to the prayers of His saints under trial. So He confirms their faith. And while the false and deceitful are tortured by the miserable result of their thoughts and doings, the true of heart and the faithful are made glad by the

further shewing forth of that kingdom of God, for the coming of which they offer their daily prayer.

This Psalm was written by David when he was suffering from Saul's enmity, and from the calumnies of those who stirred up Saul against him. St. Augustine interprets it of the Pharisees accusing our Lord before Pilate.

Ebening Prayer.

PSALM lkv. *Te decet hymnus.*

1. THOU, O God, art praised in Sion : and unto Thee shall the vow be performed in Jerusalem.

Heb. Unto Thee, O God, is the silence of praise in Sion ;
And unto Thee shall the vow be performed.

2. Thou that hearest the prayer : unto Thee shall all flesh come.

They who come before the Most High God to praise Him must come with awe and quiet reverence. Thus the holy soul shews the fulness and intense-ness of its love. It was in the hill of Sion that He was praised of old ; but now, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the hill of Sion. Wherever the Lord is set forth in His Word and in His Sacraments, there is His temple, and there may we pay our vows. There is our home, and there is the foretaste of our fatherland. To Him Who hears our prayers, and through Whom our prayers are heard, shall all flesh come. He Who hath taken man's nature shall draw all men unto Himself in the eternal Sion.

3. My misdeeds prevail against me : O be Thou merciful unto our sins.

LXX. The speeches of the wicked have prevailed over us :
And Thou shalt be a propitiation for our iniquity.

It is the misdeeds of the flesh that hinder the flesh from coming to the Redeemer of all flesh. That they might no longer prevail against us, and that God might be merciful unto us, He sent forth an High Priest Who should make a propitiation for us. Our Priest took from us that which He offered for us — His own flesh. He was at once the Priest and the Victim, the Offerer and the Offering; therefore in Him our prayers are heard, and to Him our flesh shall come.

4. Blessed is the man, whom Thou choosest, and receivest unto Thee : he shall dwell in Thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple.

Christ, Whom God chose, and of Whom He said, 'This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased,' is indeed 'over all, God blessed for ever.' But in Him His elect are blessed too. For His sake, not for our own, are we chosen; in Him, not in ourselves, are we received by God, being accepted in the Beloved; and therefore in Him are we blessed; He is our blessing. With that High Priest, Who has ascended into the holy place and entered within the veil, we enter into the house of God; we learn to

dwell therein ; we are filled with its spiritual joys, we partake of its holy mysteries and sacraments of grace and love.

5. Thou shalt shew us wonderful things in Thy righteousness, O God of our salvation : Thou that art the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea.

6. Who in His strength setteth fast the mountains : and is girded about with power.

7. Who stilleth the raging of the sea : and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people.

There does the God of our salvation, the One mighty to save, reveal to us the wonders of His power and of His grace ; and the miracles of His humility are seen to be more marvellous than the miracles of His omnipotence. He is the Saviour of the world—not of Israel only, but of the ends of the earth, and of those who dwell in the islands of the sea. They that are afar off, and they that are nigh, are alike receivers of His grace. He hath set fast the mountains ; so hath He appointed the mighty preachers of His Word, His apostles and the ministers who follow them, to be like mountains, humble in themselves, lofty and strong in Him. He is all-powerful, for He is girded with the power of truth and righteousness and faithfulness, towards His erring and deceived creatures. Be it that this lower world is like a sea, salt and bitter, and tost with storms, 'whose

waters are peoples and multitudes, and nations and tongues,' yet He saves them who dwell therein from its tempests and its raging. Fierce as it may be, He says to it, 'Peace, be still;' and the noise of its waves is silenced: and the madness of the peoples of the world, their self-confidence and their self-tormenting fretfulness, are in like manner subject to His constraining grace.

8. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth shall be afraid at Thy tokens: Thou that makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise Thee.

They whom He sent forth went everywhere shewing to the uttermost parts of the earth not only the miracles done by His Name, but the life and immortality brought to light by Him. They saw, and feared, and believed on Him. And so both the east and the west were brought to know Him and to praise Him, and every human soul, whether rejoicing in the morning of prosperity or desolate in the evening of sorrow, has been made to see the only sure hope and refuge and the only true joy. Therefore should we praise Him in our youth, and praise Him in our age, praise Him in our morning prayer, and praise Him in our evening sacrifice. And so the evening and the morning of this mortal life shall be the first day of that everlasting week in which the new creation of God shall praise Him without end.

9. Thou visitest the earth, and blessest it: Thou makest it very plenteous.

Like a bountiful and loving Monarch, He comes not to visit His people without a gift, yea, many gifts, both natural and spiritual. All that we have comes from Him, whatever it may be. His blessings for both our bodies and our souls are so infinite that they cannot be expressed, and yet so excellent that they must not be forgotten.

10. The river of God is full of water : Thou preparest their corn, for so Thou providest for the earth.

11. Thou waterest her furrows, Thou sendest rain into the little valleys thereof : Thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and blessest the increase of it.

As a river that is full of water makes the fields fruitful through which it flows, so is the human nature of the Saviour made a channel of unceasing grace to man. Of His fulness have we received. He hath said, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.' As there are many Churches and yet one Church, and many faithful and yet one Bride of Christ; so there are many rivers, and yet but one River, making fruitful the field of the world, that it may return many-fold to the heavenly Sower. There are many means of grace, like rivulets running through the furrows of the field; there is the gentle influence of the Holy Spirit, like rain dropping into the valleys thereof, softening the clay-clods of our dry and barren hearts, and making them and that

which they bring forth blessed. But all these graces come from that one full and abounding channel of grace, the glorified human nature of the Son of God.

12. Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness : and Thy clouds drop fatness.

Heb. Thy goings forth drop fatness.

LXX. Thy fields shall be filled with plenty.

13. They shall drop upon the dwellings of the wilderness : and the little hills shall rejoice on every side.

14. The folds shall be full of sheep : the valleys also shall stand so thick with corn, that they shall laugh and sing.

As the harvest is, as it were, the crown of the year, placed upon it by the loving and mighty hand of the God of nature ; so the end of the world, which is the harvest for eternity, shall crown and consummate His kingdom of grace with the blessing of infinite glory. As time goes by, and as that last gathering of corn into the eternal garner draws on, and He Who hath 'the golden crown and the sharp sickle' is ever coming nearer, so does His grace fall upon the seed He once went forth to sow in the field of the world, in greater and fuller richness. That which was once a desert is become a smiling land. The ignorant are made wise, the sinful are made obedient. Many sheep are brought within the fold of the Church : fruits of righteousness and godliness shall be found abundant among the lowest as among the highest ; and the

joy with which an earthly harvest is gathered in, and the shouts and songs which its plenteousness calls forth, will be a pattern for the everlasting joy and the unending song of those who shall be present at the eternal harvest which shall crown and end God's dealings of goodness with this created world.

This was a Psalm written by David in praise to God for His goodness in giving His people the prospect of a plenteous harvest. Some have supposed that it was written to be sung in the spring, on the second day of the Passover, when the sheaf of the first-fruits was to be offered, (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11); others have ascribed it to the time of the relief from the three years' famine which came upon Israel for Saul's cruelty to the Gibeonites, (2 Sam. xxi. 1—14,) on which occasion God shewed Himself peculiarly to be "the God that heareth prayer," (2), since David "enquired of the Lord" after the famine had continued three years, "and the Lord answered." The poetry of this is such as well expresses the praise and joy of grateful hearts.

PSALM lxvi. *Jubilate Deo.*

FOR THE THANKSGIVING AFTER A STORM.

1. O BE joyful in God, all ye lands : sing praises unto the honour of His Name, make His praise to be glorious.

It is the office of the saints to bid the world rejoice; not only themselves to rejoice in the mercy and grace of the Most High, but to teach others also the words of that thanksgiving which they have learned. They will sing most worthily before Him, who have received from Him that which they should sing.

2. Say unto God, O how wonderful art

Thou in Thy works : through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies be found liars unto Thee.

Heb. Thine enemies shall feign submission before Thee.

3. For all the world shall worship Thee : sing of Thee, and praise Thy Name.

The works of God are always wonderful both in nature and in grace ; but when He has awed our spirits and stirred our souls by some mighty display of His power in nature, by shewing how the ' wind and storm fulfil His word,' and has made us own to ourselves how real His power is, by making us feel how near it is to us, then can we not help confessing His marvellous dealings and His terrible might, and even the careless and hard of heart for a little while are overcome by feelings of submission and of fear. Then do we need, as it were, that all the world too should own Him with us, and join in our praises to His divine Majesty.

4. O come hither, and behold the works of God : how wonderful He is in His doing toward the children of men.

5. He turned the sea into dry land : so that they went through the water on foot ; there did we rejoice thereof.

In His works of nature, in His works of providence, in His works of grace, if we will come and see, shall we equally behold His wisdom, His power, and His love toward the race of man. In the his-

tory of His dealings with Israel may we see, as in a mirror, His graciousness and mercy to all mankind, and above all, to the Church of His redeemed. For them He turned the deeps of the Red Sea into a high road, so that 'they went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.' And thus did they, who went before us in the knowledge of God and of His law, all go 'under the cloud, and all pass through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.' And again, He divided the Jordan, that they might pass into the land of rest. And there did not they only, but we too in them, rejoice in God's saving power;—not they only, but we too, for in the communion of saints all are made one from the beginning even to the end of the covenant of grace.

6. He ruleth with His power for ever; His eyes behold the people: and such as will not believe shall not be able to exalt themselves.

He ruled then as He rules now; He rules now as He ruled then. He beholds the ungodly people of the world at this time, and judges them, as He beheld the Canaanites then, and condemned them. Only by faith in Him, and by humility in themselves, can men be raised into nearness to Him. And they who believe not in Him and in His righteousness shall fall without help, and never rise.

7. O praise our God, ye people: and make the voice of His praise to be heard;

8. Who holdeth our soul in life : and suffereth not our feet to slip.

In Him must we rejoice, and Him must we praise for each hour of life we have. He wills us to live, and we do live; He ceases to will that we should live, and we die: and so too with our spiritual being, if His grace join with our will, then the sin and evil of our nature is subdued and cast out; but if our will join with the evil of our nature against His grace, then most sadly do we fall, and the life of our soul is hurled swiftly down into destruction.

9. For Thou, O God, hast proved us : Thou also hast tried us, like as silver is tried.

10. Thou broughtest us into the snare : and laidest trouble upon our loins.

11. Thou sufferedst men to ride over our heads : we went through fire and water, and Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

Thus did God deal with Israel. He tried them in the iron furnace of affliction in Egypt, as silver is purged from its impurity in the fire. He led them by His providence into Egypt. He suffered the Egyptians to 'make their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.' And then He at length delivered them, when He had tried them. He brought them with the pillar of fire by night above them, and the waters of the sea on each side,

a foreshewing of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, through the wilderness into the land flowing with milk and honey, a land of refreshing and of rest. So He delivered them from the waters of drowning, and led them to the waters of blessing.

12. I will go into Thine house with burnt-offerings : and will pay Thee my vows, which I promised with my lips, and spake with my mouth, when I was in trouble.

13. I will offer unto Thee fat burnt-sacrifices, with the incense of rams : I will offer bullocks and goats.

And for this deliverance and this miracle, and for those higher deliverances and more glorious marvels, of which these were but the foreshadowings and types, must the Church ever be thankful; and not only the Church, but each single soul within the Church. The deliverance, and the grace, and the inheritance are not for one only, but for all; and not only for all, but for each one; and therefore 'I' must alternate with 'we' in the thanksgivings which the faithful pay in God's holy Church for their being saved from their sin and its doom; and above all, when they join in the commemoration of that highest sacrifice of the Lamb without spot, which fulfilled and accomplished in itself all the burnt-offerings and the sacrifices of the race of Aaron.

14. O come hither, and hearken, all ye that

fear God : and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.

15. I called unto Him with my mouth : and gave Him praises with my tongue.

And while each one can recollect His wonderful works towards the Church in all times, he can feel still more keenly and tell still more plainly that which God has done for his own soul. That Christ Jesus died for sinners, is a most high and holy truth ; but deeper still and dearer to the believer's soul is the truth, that Christ Jesus died for him. This makes his heart call aloud to God his Redeemer, and fills his tongue with words of living praise ! All other deliverances from storm and danger are but images of that deliverance which rescued us from everlasting loss in the storm in which the world shall perish.

16. If I incline unto wickedness with mine heart : the Lord will not hear me.

17. But God hath heard me : and considered the voice of my prayer.

And the calling for grace by diligent prayer, and the knowing that we receive it in answer to our prayer, are signs sure and to be trusted in that we are in a state of grace, that we have no hidden, cherished, unrepented sin defiling our soul and rendering our prayers empty and vain. ' We know that God heareth not sinners : but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.'

18. Praised be God Who hath not cast out my prayer : nor turned His mercy from me.

Let us not be faint in prayer, for God will never cast out that which comes from a true and earnest heart. He may put off His granting, but He will not put it away. He will never turn away His mercy from the soul that is in faith turned unto Him.

This Psalm was intended for the temple-service. Its title is "to the chief Musician : a joyful song or psalm ;" to which the LXX adds, "of the Resurrection." The author is left uncertain : it may, perhaps, consist of an ancient song of praise, first written on the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan, and afterwards revised and adapted to the temple-worship by the Levites in the time of Hezekiah. (2 Chron. xxix., xxx.) It is appointed by the Church of England to be said for the thanksgiving after a storm, in the service to be used at sea.

PSALM lxxvii. *Deus misereatur.*

ONE OF THE CANTICLES FOR EVENING PRAYER,
AND FOR THE SOLEMNIZATION OF HOLY
MATRIMONY.

1. God be merciful unto us, and bless us : and shew us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us ;

2. That Thy way may be known upon earth : Thy saving health among all nations.

In His mercy our God blesses His people ; and His blessing is the shewing forth of His mercy. His mercy is magnified, not in the looking upon His creatures in love, but in His making them to know that He looks on them with love. This won-

der He wrought in sending Him into the world Whom aged Simeon took into his arms and gazed upon, and then asked that he might 'depart in peace, because his eyes had seen the salvation which God had prepared, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of His people Israel.' In the Son of God, 'Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person,' was the way of the All-holy made known upon the earth, and salvation was freely and fully offered to all the nations of the world, who had been long waiting in blindness and sin for the accomplishment of the promise made to Abraham,—'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.'

3. Let the people praise Thee, O God : yea, let all the people praise Thee.

The love of God should stir up the praise of man. He gives the peoples of the earth blessings without number ; what can they return to Him but thanksgiving and praise continually ! Not only in the season of their earthly joy, but day by day continually, as day by day His blessings come to them.

4. O let the nations rejoice and be glad : for Thou shalt judge the folk righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.

And this is the cause for the joy and praise of the world, and of the Church in the world,—that they are no longer left to judge for themselves, or to follow a false and vain guide, 'even as they were

led,' but the righteous and loving God has Himself become both their Judge and King. Is it not a joyful thing to know that we shall be judged, not by an unrighteous law, but by a most righteous one; that we are guided and ruled, not by a cruel or self-willed tyrant, but by a most good and loving King? 'Forasmuch as He is righteous Himself, He ordereth all things righteously.' In Christ the Lord have the nations of the world found light instead of darkness, truth instead of ignorance, life instead of death, blessing instead of cursing; therefore in Him, and through Him, and for Him, should they rejoice and be glad unceasingly and unweariedly.

5. Let the people praise Thee, O God : let all the people praise Thee.

6. Then shall the earth bring forth her increase : and God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing.

May He, Who has given us mercy and blessing, give us ever grace to thank Him for His mighty love! May each redeemed soul by itself, and all the multitude of the redeemed in the communion of saints, with one mouth and one heart ever praise Him for His salvation; and may each generation, as it passes away from the shadows of earth into the fulness of the light of His countenance, leave to the generation which follows it an ever-increasing sense of joyfulness, and gratitude! Then shall 'the continual dew of His blessing' and the refreshing streams of His grace make the world fruitful in saints, and

make the elect to abound in the fruit of good works, brought forth from 'honest and good hearts' year after year; until the last great harvest be ready to be gathered in, until the earth bring forth her increase in the resurrection of the dead, and that which has been sown in corruption and in dishonour be reaped in incorruption and in glory, and be ready to receive the blessing of our Saviour, and our Judge, and our God, when He shall say, 'Come, ye blessed.'

7. God shall bless us : and all the ends of the world shall fear Him.

Then the blessings of earth shall be exchanged for the blessings of heaven. The uncreated and eternal Father, the only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son, shall be revealed in the perfection of glory before the pure in heart; and all the dwellers in the new heaven and the new earth shall 'fear the Lord and His goodness,' and bend in adoring reverence and love before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

"To the chief Musician on the harp, a joyful song," is the title of this Psalm. It was perhaps of considerable antiquity, and used at the gathering in of the harvest, as well as in the public service of the Temple. The harvest was generally a time of rejoicing, (see Isai. ix. 3.) It is used by the Church of England, not only in the office for the celebration of Holy Matrimony, but also in the daily Evening Prayer, as if to teach us that spiritual joy was not merely to be given utterance to at one particular joyful event in our life, but was to be expressed by every redeemed member of the Christian Church every day.

Morning Prayer.

FOR WHITSUNDAY.

PSALM lxxviii. *Exurgat Deus.*

1. LET God arise, and let His enemies be scattered : let them also that hate Him flee before Him.

As of old 'it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee;' so in the exaltation of the ark of the second covenant, the human nature of the Son of God, there is the same,—yea, a far brighter,—shewing forth of glory and of power. Jesus Christ arose from the grave on Easter-day, and the guards who watched the sepulchre were affrighted and fled, and the Pharisees were confounded. He ascended into heaven on Holy Thursday, and death was conquered and hell was spoiled. He sent down the Holy Ghost on Whitsunday, and the world was subdued unto Him, and the dominion of sin was so broken, that all the sins of all shall be finally destroyed either in His mighty wrath or in His mighty love.

2. Like as the smoke vanisheth, so shalt Thou drive them away : and like as wax melteth at the fire, so let the ungodly perish at the presence of God.

3. But let the righteous be glad and rejoice before God : let them also be merry and joyful.

Before the fear of God all that is ungodly must flee. While He reveals Himself not, sinners may harden themselves in hating Him; but when He is revealed in Almighty holiness, and truth, and love, all that is opposed to Him must utterly perish and come to nothing. They that have made nought of Him shall be brought to nought before Him. Like smoke before the rushing wind, so shall evil vanish before the power of the Holy Ghost; like wax before the flame, so malice shall perish in the presence of the love of Christ. And not evil men only, but evil angels, are scattered in the presence of God; for He Who makes His holy angels winds and flame to execute His word, shall make the evil spirits but as fleeting smoke and melting wax before them. As He displays His awful presence, all shall vanish from before Him but they who love Him; and they shall rejoice before God. They shall no longer, as now, rejoice with trembling, but they shall be merry with perfect and eternal joy.

4. O sing unto God, and sing praises unto His Name : magnify Him that rideth upon the heavens, as it were upon an horse; praise Him in His Name JAH, and rejoice before Him.

Heb. Cast up a way for Him Who rideth on in the deserts.

LXX. Make a way for Him Who ascendeth above the setting :
For the Lord is His Name.

They sing unto God who live unto God; they sing praises unto His Name that work unto His glory. By so singing His praise, by so doing His will, do we prepare a way for Him Who came into the deserts of this barren world, and from it ascended into the heavens and sat down at the right hand of God. He is the guide of His chosen through the wilderness, and by following close after Him do we acknowledge Him as our King and confess Him as our God. Thus do we but praise Him Whose name and nature is the name and nature of the Godhead, the All-glorious, the All-powerful, the Eternal.

5. He is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows : even God in His holy habitation.

6. He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house, and bringeth the prisoners out of captivity : but letteth the runagates continue in scarceness.

Heb. God giveth the solitary a home.

But His love is still the highest of His glories. He is become a father to them who were orphans indeed, for that they knew not their Father Which is in heaven. He is a protector of those souls which were indeed widows, for that they had not for their spouse the eternal Word. He gives us His law of love from His holy throne, as He gave His law of obedience in the holy mount of Sinai. By it He brings the wandering and the lonely into the unity of His Church, giving them a home therein, that

they may dwell in concord and in peace. By His love He looses the bonds of sin, and sets the captives free from its prison and its chain, as He brought Israel out of Egypt; while they who refuse His offers of mercy and of grace are left to themselves and to their own misery. The rebels are banished to the barren habitation they have chosen for themselves. They who provoke Him are left to their own works which are dead, and to their own hopes which are dead.

7. O God, when Thou wentest forth before the people : when Thou wentest through the wilderness,

8. The earth shook, and the heavens dropped at the presence of God : even as Sinai also was moved at the presence of God, Who is the God of Israel.

God Himself was the Captain Who led the hosts of the Lord out of Egypt. He marched at their head in the pillar of cloud and fire. At His will the earth shook; at His will the heavens dropped down manna. It was that same Almighty God, the God of Israel, Who gave to His people the bread from heaven, and Who spake to them in darkness, and storm, and earthquake, from the mount of Sinai. So also Christ the Son of God is with His people, and of the glory of His presence the fiery pillar was but a shadow; and in the accomplishing of His work of love there was the darkness and earthquake

on Calvary, as there was at Sinai; there was bread of heaven given in the last Supper in upper room, as it was given in the wilderness.

9. Thou, O God, sentest a gracious upon Thine inheritance : and refreshed when it was weary.

10. Thy congregation shall dwell there for Thou, O God, hast of Thy goodness prepared for the poor.

LXX. Thy living creatures shall dwell therein.

And whatever refreshings of dew from heaven and waters from the rock were sent to the Church in the desert, when it thirsted and was weary, a precious outpouring of His goodness has been sent for us, 'because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Which is given unto us.' And if Canaan was given for His congregation to dwell in, and He of His goodness made it ready for the poor of Jacob to inherit, so Christ also hath a better Canaan in readiness for His Church, which He has prepared for the poor in spirit,—for their goodness, but of His—'when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.'

11. The Lord gave the word : great was the company of the preachers.

12. Kings with their armies did flee, were discomfited : and they of the house divided the spoil. ,

Heb. The Lord gives the word :

Of female messengers there is a great band.

Kings with their armies flee,—they flee ;

She who dwells at home divides the spoil.

LXX. The Lord God shall give the word

To them who preach the Gospel in much power.

The King of the forces of the Beloved, of the Beloved,

Shall give to divide the spoil to the beauty of the house.

Christ hath given us the promise of victory,—‘ Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.’ And in the unity of the one Church there are many Churches, to whom is assigned the duty of carrying that glorious message ; even as Mary Magdalene and the women spread far and wide the tidings of the resurrection. In the power of that word, emperors and kings were overcome, and brought to the obedience of faith. By the Name of Him Who gave that word, the principalities and powers of the unseen world were utterly routed and discomfited. By it the Church of the living God, which He purchased with His blood, divided the spoil of the world ; and the glory and riches of earth were taken to adorn and make beautiful the house of the Lord of heaven.


13. Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove : that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold.

14. When the Almighty scattered kings for their sake : then were they as white as snow in Salmon.

Heb. When ye rest between the boundaries,
Ye are as a dove's wings covered with silver,
And her feathers with the yellow of gold.
When the Almighty scatters the kings in it,
It is snowy in Zalmon.

LXX. If ye have slept between the lots,
Ye are the wings of a dove bright with silver,
And her back with the burnish of gold.
When the Heavenly One assigns kings over her,
They shall be white with snow in Salmon.

When the Church of God is settled in her appointed place, like Israel delivered from the brick-kilns of Egypt and settled in the boundaries of Canaan,—when she reposes between the Old covenant and the New, the law of obedience and the gospel of love, inheriting both and keeping both, then is she worthy of her Lord's loving word—'My dove, My undefiled is but one.' She is then glorious and beautiful; holiness and charity bear her up, as a dove is borne on her wings; her purity is brighter than silver, her wisdom shines beyond gold. 'To her it is granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.' When the powers of earth have been scattered away before the face of her Almighty Lord, then the procession of her elders and her holy ones, 'clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands,' following the Lamb into His eternal kingdom from this dark and rugged world, shall be like the gleam of new-fallen snow-drifts lying bright and pure above the gloomy glens and overshadowing thickets of Mount Salmon. Their



sins may once have been as scarlet, but in Him shall they be white as snow.

15. As the hill of Basan, so is God's hill : even an high hill, as the hill of Basan.

16. Why hop ye so, ye high hills ? this is God's hill, in the which it pleaseth Him to dwell : yea, the Lord will abide in it for ever.

Heb. Why are ye envious, ye high mountains,

Against the mountain which the Lord chooses for His dwelling ?

The kingdoms of the world are strong, but the kingdom of heaven is stronger far. Og the king of Bashan, when he went out to battle against Israel, was smitten, 'and his sons and all his people, and they possessed his land.' The craggy heights of Mount Bashan and its many summits were no safeguard to its king. Its glory was to be as nothing compared with that of Sion. Grace is mightier than nature : it is in vain for the kingdoms of the earth to resist, or to be envious of the kingdom of Christ. God has been pleased to establish it, not as they have been established for a time, but for ever. His presence hallows it eternally. 'It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it.'

17. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels : and the Lord is among them, as in the holy place of Sinai.

LXX. The chariots of God are many myriads :
There are thousands of them rejoicing.
The Lord is in them in Sinai, in the holy place.

The world may boast its many chariots of iron, but the host of God is more in number and more terrible. The chariots of God are the heavenly and spiritual powers. 'They that be with us are more than they which be with them.' Unto our God 'thousand thousands minister, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him.' He made Sinai His holy place, and from thence He made His seat on Sion. Sinai is the type of the first covenant, Sion of the second covenant. We who are born after the Spirit 'are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel.'

18. Thou art gone up on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men : yea, even for Thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Christ the Lord in His ascension, when He went on high unto His everlasting throne, bound those who made us captives, and loosed us who had been made captives by them ; He made sin, and death,

and hell His slaves, He set the souls which they had enslaved free. But He gave to us a nobler gift than liberty, even grace; He hath both made us free and He hath made us rich: He received gifts for men, and He gave gifts to men; He received as man for men what as God He gave to men,—the gift of the Holy Ghost, that God the Holy Ghost should dwell among us. Like a mighty conqueror He bestowed His bounties on all who beheld His triumph. He gave gifts not only to the obedient, but to rebels and sinners. None that will receive are left without a gift, ‘But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.’

19. Praised be the Lord daily : even the God Who helpeth us, and poureth His benefits upon us.

To the Father Who loved us, and the Son Who died for us, Who have given us the Holy Ghost, and to the Eternal Spirit Who proceedeth from them, the Lord and Giver of life, is our praise due from day to day, all the days of this our mortal life. He delivers us from the burden of our sins and sorrows, to lay upon us the burden of His love and mercy.

20. He is our God, even the God of Whom cometh salvation : God is the Lord, by Whom we escape death.

Heb. The Lord hath the goings forth of death.

Or otherwise :—

For death are the goings forth of the Lord.

21. God shall wound the head of His enemies : and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his wickedness.

Our Saviour is our God. With Him is the power of life and of death. He willed that the outgoing of death should be His, that it might not be ours. When He goes forth in love He delivers His people from death; when He goes forth in anger, death waits upon Him. They that hardily resist Him, and go on in wickedness, bring upon their own heads dismay and death. In one way or the other shall the heads of His enemies be crushed, and their pride be broken, either by their being bowed down with humility, or by their being pierced with destruction.

22. The Lord hath said, I will bring My people again, as I did from Basan : Mine own will I bring again, as I did sometime from the deep of the sea.

23. That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies : and that the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same.

He never forgets His own. He will bring them safe through danger, and sorrow, and death, as He brought the children of Israel from the land of Bashan over Jordan, into the promised land, and as He brought them out of Egypt through the depths of the Red Sea. He will destroy their enemies, and deliver them from their persecutors, even as He destroyed the Canaanites before Joshua, and as He in after-time avenged the innocent blood of Naboth on Ahab, and on Jezebel, whose blood the dogs licked in the same place where they licked that of Naboth.

24. It is well seen, O God, how Thou goest : how Thou, my God and King, goest in the sanctuary.

25. The singers go before, the minstrels follow after : in the midst are the damsels playing with the timbrels.

His goings are seen in the ways of His saints. The mighty procession of the elect shews the love and the power of their Redeemer. The joyful choirs who followed the ark as it was borne up Mount Sion were an emblem and a type of the triumph of the Church. Like as we have heard in time past, so shall we see it in the world to come. There are they who sing the new song before the throne, there are the harpers harping with their harps, there are the virgins who have subdued the flesh, spiritually tuneful in the praise of God.

26. Give thanks, O Israel, unto God the

Lord in the congregations : from the ground of the heart.

Heb. Bless ye God in the assemblies,
Even the Lord, ye from the fountains of Israel.

LXX. In the Churches bless ye God,
The Lord, from the fountains of Israel.

And this is their song, the ascribing with a loving spirit and a true heart, praise, and glory, and blessing to the eternal God, Who for us was made man. The tribes of Israel must praise Him Who is sprung from the race of Israel, Who took on Him the seed of Abraham.

27. There is little Benjamin their ruler, and the princes of Judah their counsel : the princes of Zabulon, and the princes of Nephthali.

LXX. There is Benjamin the youngest in a trance.

In that mighty band are found all the saved, each one of the tribes of Israel who were among the number of them that were sealed. As in the procession of the ark, there came first Benjamin and Judah, the royal tribes of Saul and David, who were the tribes of the south, and there followed from the north the learned tribes, of Naphtali who 'giveth goodly words,' and of 'Zebulun who handleth the pen of the writer;' so among the multitudes before the throne of God that Apostle is conspicuous with a crown of righteousness who was of the tribe of Benjamin, who once 'ravined as a wolf,' in the morning of his youth 'devouring the prey' by persecuting the Church, and at the night of his old age 'dividing the spoil' in the conversion of the

world. St. Paul had seen the Lord, not in earth, but from heaven, and though he were 'the least of the Apostles,' yet was his share of labour and of grace larger than that of his brethren. There, too, are seen the sons of Zebedee, and James, and Thaddeus, and Levi, and Simon—counsellors of eternal truth from Judah; and Andrew, and Peter, and Philip, and the others of the chosen twelve, called to be princes and Apostles in the Church from that Zabulon and Naphtali which once 'walked in darkness' but which in God's time 'saw the great light of Incarnate Love.'

28. Thy God hath sent forth strength for thee : stablish the thing, O God, that Thou hast wrought in us,

29. For Thy temple's sake at Jerusalem : so shall kings bring presents unto thee.

It was the Father and the Son Who sent forth the Holy Ghost for the enlightening and guiding of the Church. The prayers, therefore, and intercessions of His faithful people must ever be offered up, that the sevenfold gifts of the Eternal Spirit be not lost by us, but that His sanctifying work, which He has begun, may be established and made perfect in us. And this we ask, not for our own sake, but for His Who chose us and made us His. The kings of the earth brought presents to His sanctuary, not because it was holy of itself, but because it was God's temple, and He had made it holy. 'The temple of God is *holy, which temple we are.*' He has not chosen

His Church because she was holy, but it is His choice that has made her holy.

30. When the company of the spearmen, and multitude of the mighty are scattered abroad among the beasts of the people, so that they humbly bring pieces of silver : and when He hath scattered the people that delight in war ;

Heb. Rebuke the beasts of the reeds,
The herd of the bulls, with the calves of the people,
Till they submit themselves with bars of silver.
Scatter the people who love war.

Or :—

Rebuke the congregation of the reed, i.e. Egypt,
The assembly who trust in the calf-idols of the people,
Who dance with fragments of silver ; i.e. timbrels.

Or :—

Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds ; i.e. the lion ;
The herd of the strong ones and the calves,
Who delight in the silver waters.

LXX. The assembly of bulls among the heifers of the people.
To shut out them who have not been tried with silver.

31. Then shall the princes come out of Egypt : the Morians' land shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

God and His grace only can subdue the power of the world. He only could rebuke that mighty Behemoth, which was the emblem of Egypt, 'who lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed and fens.' He only could tame the pride of those princes who ruled their peoples like the bulls rule their herds of calves, to make them submissive to

the law of obedience, and to pay their tribute of silver to their true Lord. He only puts to flight those whose courage and skill else ensure them victory, and whose pleasure is in war. Only the Holy Ghost can bring all to be subject to Himself, whether idolaters worshipping vain gods and idols, or heretics leading others astray by their own headstrong fancies and judgments blinded by the love of gain. But by His marvellous power and holy guidance, they who were once afar off are brought nigh, and nations who were given up to darkness are made by His working full of light and truth. From Egypt, which once worshipped Apis and Isis, under the shape of the beasts of the field, came forth in after times holy doctors, and fathers, and martyrs for God's truth,—Clement, and Athanasius, and Dionysius, who were leaders in the Church and princes indeed. And it shall not be long before the children of Cush, who have long abode in misery and ignorance, shall see the stretching out of their Saviour's hands for them, and shall stretch out their hands to Him in gratitude, and prayer, and praise.

32. Sing unto God, O ye kingdoms of the earth : O sing praises unto the Lord ;

33. Who sitteth in the heavens over all from the beginning : lo, He doth send out His voice, yea, and that a mighty voice.

Christ is ascended, and is the Lord of all. All the kingdoms of the earth are His. Their obedience is His; their praise is His. He is the King from

everlasting to everlasting, and His command is an eternal law. His word is now with power. It rideth on and runneth very swiftly. Once God the Word was dumb as a lamb before her shearers ; now He utters His voice and all the ends of the earth can hear it, and when they hear it they are converted and are turned unto their Lord.

34. Ascribe ye the power to God over Israel : His worship, and strength is in the clouds.

35. O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy holy places : even the God of Israel ; He will give strength and power unto His people ; blessed be God.

Over Israel and through all the world is His power, Who hath ascended within the clouds, and is set down in the highest heaven on the throne of eternity. 'The heavens and the heaven of heavens are the Lord's, the earth and all that is therein.' As the ark was carried in gladness and triumph, and borne within the holy of holies, to be a mystery and a marvel, and at the same time a cause of strength and source of power to Israel, so is our Lord and Saviour ascended above the heavens and passed within the veil, to give strength and power, mercy and pardon, grace and salvation, unto His people,—in Whom and for Whom blessed be God for evermore !

The title of this noble and awful Psalm ascribes it to David. It was probably used by him for the bringing the ark up to Sion,

(2 Sam. vi.). There was, doubtless, as verses 24, 25, 27 imply, a solemn procession of choirs of singers, of virgins with timbrels, and of players on instruments, attending on the ark, together with the heads of various tribes assembled to conduct it with due reverence to Mount Sion; and the Psalm was begun at the first lifting up of the ark, as they brought it from the house of Obed-edom the Kohathite of Gath-rimmon, and ended with the depositing it within the most holy place. The first verse of the Psalm was composed by Moses to be chanted at the moving forward of the ark, (Num. x. 35). Verses 7, 8, again, are taken from the song of Deborah, (Judges v. 4, 5); and it is very possible that other portions of this Psalm also were taken from older religious or triumphal songs, such as perhaps were contained in "The Book of the Wars of the Lord," (Num. xxi. 14). This will account for the obscurity in which many of the verses are still involved, in spite of the efforts made to explain them. Among these passages, verses 11—14 and 30, 31, are the most obscure. The word which our translation renders "pots," is "sheepfolds" in Judges v. 16, and seems to mean "a double boundary;" and the LXX. translate it "lots or inheritances." "It was snowy in Salmon" has been supposed to mean that the bones of the slain lay as thick as snow in Salmon, or Zalmon, a thick-wooded mountain in the north-east of Palestine. (See Judges ix. 48.) It more probably referred to a triumphal procession of Israelites clad in snow-white garments. For an account of Bashan, see Deut. iii. 1—14. Verse 30 is indeed full of difficulty: the words of our translation, "the company of the spearmen," would be more correctly rendered "the beast of the reeds," meaning the lion, or the crocodile, or rather the hippopotamus, as the emblem of the king of Egypt. The "calves" may signify either the inferior people, contrasted with the bulls, their leaders (for the fitness of this Eastern emblem, compare the sculptures from Nineveh,) or may be the calf-idols, such as Apis, which the Egyptians worshipped with dances and the sound of instruments of silver. The Psalm is appointed by the Church for Whitsunday, because the Holy Spirit was the chiefest of the gifts Christ gave to man after His ascension. Verse 18 of this Psalm is quoted by St. Paul, Eph. iv. 8.

FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

PSALM lxix. *Salvum me fac.*

1. SAVE me, O God : for the waters are come in, even unto my soul.

2. I stick fast in the deep mire, where no ground is : I am come into deep waters, so that the floods run over me.

Here Christ is praying: for though this be the cry and the complaint of all who inherit man's nature in their sorrow and distress, yet, as the sorrow and agony of Christ was greater than all other sorrow, so does His cry go upward to the throne of God with the fulness in itself of all the pain that was ever suffered and all the sorrow that was ever borne. He cried to the Father, 'Save me, O God,' for the waters of tribulation came even into His soul. So deeply had we sunk through human pride, that Divine humility could only raise us by coming down to where we had fallen. Therefore Christ was engulfed in the treacherous mire of earth, in which is no stay nor resting-place; the tempest of misery fell upon Him, and the floods of anguish and of terror ran over Him.

3. I am weary of crying; my throat is dry: my sight faileth me for waiting so long upon my God.

He had cried to God for the ways of man; He had cried to man of the ways of God; He had not ceased, from His first beginning to teach, till He

said upon the cross, I thirst. His eyes had grown dim, and His flesh was faint and weary with His sufferings, through the long passion of His life on earth. He had been waiting in poverty, and insult, and treachery, and scourging, and pain, until He cried, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

4. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head : they that are mine enemies, and would destroy me guiltless, are mighty.

5. I paid them the things that I never took : God, Thou knowest my simpleness, and my faults are not hid from Thee.

His heart-broken reproach was, 'If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin ; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.' He had done no sin, yet He suffered the punishment of sin. Adam in disobedience took of the fruit of the tree of knowledge ; but Christ in obedience paid the penalty of death. He Who was very wisdom put on the simplicity of man ; He Who was perfect holiness took on Himself the faults of our erring and sinful race.

6. Let not them that trust in Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my cause : let not those that seek Thee be confounded through me, O Lord God of Israel.

7. And why? for Thy sake have I suffered reproof : shame hath covered my face.

He gained for them that trust in Him the mighty grace of boldness in the day of judgment ; He won for His own that they should never be confounded, not even by their own sins and faults. But how? By His own shame He gained them boldness ; by the mockeries and reproofs which He endured, He won confidence for them. We were set free and comforted ; ‘but the men that held Jesus mocked Him and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee?’ Yet the veil of humiliation which covered the brightness of the Son of God did but testify to His hidden glory.

8. I am become a stranger unto my brethren : even an alien unto my mother’s children.

It was His own nation who delivered Him up to the unjust judge. ‘He came to His own, and His own received Him not.’ It was His countrymen of the seed of Abraham who refused Him and crucified Him. ‘Neither did His brethren believe on Him.’

9. For the zeal of Thine house hath even eaten me : and the rebukes of them that rebuked Thee are fallen upon me.

He ‘went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting ; and when He

had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise. And His disciples remembered that it was written, 'The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.' He pleased God, He saved man, but He pleased not Himself. He suffered shame and false-witness for His zeal for the house of God. His example is for us, that 'we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, 'The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.'

10. I wept, and chastened myself with fasting : and that was turned to my reproof.

11. I put on sackcloth also : and they jested upon me.

12. They that sit in the gate speak against me : and the drunkards make songs upon me.

It is tears that we lack, not cause for tears; but for Him our sins were cause enough why He should weep, and His love and pity gave Him tears enough to shed. But not only did He weep for us, but 'for us men and for our salvation' He fasted forty days and forty nights in the desert. He was clothed with the sackcloth of humility, and they who were given up to the lusts and vanities of earth knew

Him not, and reviled Him. Both the rulers who sat in the seat of judgment, and the vain and evil-doing of the multitude, joined to revile Him and to mock Him. 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save,' was the reproof which almighty patience and infinite meekness endured from the idle multitudes of those He came to save.

13. But, Lord, I make my prayer unto Thee : in an acceptable time.

14. Hear me, O God, in the multitude of Thy mercy : even in the truth of Thy salvation.

Our High-Priest prayed on the great atonement-day of His death, offering before God the all-prevailing sacrifice of Himself ; He prayed for them whom the Father had given Him, and 'not for them alone, but for them also which should believe on Him through their word.' And He could not but be heard. For if God's mercies be most abundant, surely they were so to Him ; if God's promises of salvation be ever true, surely they were true unto His Christ !

15. Take me out of the mire, that I sink not : O let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.

16. Let not the water-flood drown me, neither let the deep swallow me up : and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

In His prayer for deliverance lay the prayer of all mankind. Death and sorrow had passed upon all,

and therefore they passed upon Him. Death and sorrow had conquered all, but He conquered them; and thenceforth all His people were to be conquerors in His victory. They were no longer to be engulfed in the mire; they were to be delivered from the deep waters; the deep was no longer to swallow them up; the pit should not shut her mouth upon them. He that has fallen into the deep of sin, if he turn to his Father, saying, I have sinned, forgive me my sin,—upon him the pit shall not shut her mouth.

17. Hear me, O Lord, for Thy loving-kindness is comfortable : turn Thee unto me according to the multitude of Thy mercies.

18. And hide not Thy face from Thy servant, for I am in trouble : O haste Thee, and hear me.

19. Draw nigh unto my soul, and save it : O deliver me, because of mine enemies.

Hear me—though His ears are never closed; turn Thee—though He is ever turning to us; hide Thee not—though He is ever to be found; haste Thee—though He prevents us with His grace; draw nigh—though He is ever with us. Such are the blessed contradictions of the Gospel! Wanting all things we yet have all things, for all that we ask in Christ, and with Christ, and through Christ, whether help, or pardon, or salvation, shall be granted to us through His merits and His prayer, Who before hath asked them in us and for us.

20. Thou hast known my reproof, my shame, and my dishonour : mine adversaries are all in Thy sight.

21. Thy rebuke hath broken my heart ; I am full of heaviness : I looked for some to have pity on me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort me.

He had to suffer not only pain and death, but what is harder for a tender heart—shame and disgrace. His enemies not only slew Him, but dishonoured Him. Truly the chastisement of our sins which was upon Him was no light thing to bear. Under it He Who bare the weight of the universe was ‘sore amazed and very heavy.’ No man could comfort Him, and there were none to pity Him ; for even when He came to the chosen three, He ‘found them asleep, and said unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?’ And as His trial deepened, ‘all the disciples forsook Him and fled.’

22. They gave me gall to eat : and when I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink.

To mock His weariness and thirst before He was nailed upon the tree, ‘they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall ; and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.’ Yet it was our pride and self-will which were His dishonour and shame ; it was our lusts and sins which were the nails and spear that pierced Him ; it was our luxury and self-

indulgence which were that bitter mingling of vinegar and gall.

23. Let their table be made a snare to take themselves withal : and let the things that should have been for their wealth be unto them an occasion of falling.

24. Let their eyes be blinded, that they see not : and ever bow Thou down their backs.

The justice of God ought to fill us with holy fear, for by it the greatest blessings may become instruments of death to the reprobate. The tokens of love may become means of misery to him who receives them not aright. Our Lord at His last supper dipped a sop and 'gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him,' and he betrayed his Lord. It was at the feast of the Passover that the Jews slew their King, Who should have redeemed Israel. It was at the feast of the Passover that the Romans came upon them, and 'took away both their place and their nation.' Thus at the very symbol of their deliverance from Egypt their eyes were blinded, their hearts were veiled, and they were made the captives of ignorance and fear. 'According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear : the rest were blinded unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them ; let

their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.'

25. Pour out Thine indignation upon them : and let Thy wrathful displeasure take hold of them.

26. Let their habitation be void : and no man to dwell in their tents.

27. For they persecute him whom Thou hast smitten : and they talk how they may vex them whom Thou hast wounded.

28. Let them fall from one wickedness to another : and not come into Thy righteousness.

29. Let them be wiped out of the book of the living : and not be written among the righteous.

How fully and fearfully did the anger of God fall upon the betrayers and the crucifiers of the Son of Man! Judas perished miserably, forfeiting his ministry and apostleship, even as St. Peter tells us, as 'it is written in the Book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein ;' and to the Jews, of whose sin he was the type, the saying of our Lord was accomplished,—' Behold your house is left unto you desolate.' It was for their cruelty and their treachery against the Lamb of God that all this came upon them. They went on adding sin to sin, and from one wickedness to another, until their guilt found them out, and was turned from

the whip of small cords into the scourge which finally forbad them to come into God's righteousness. So were they blotted from the book of life, and lost that which is the only cause of real rejoicing, that their names should be written in heaven.

30. As for me, when I am poor and in heaviness : Thy help, O God, shall lift me up.

31. I will praise the Name of God with a song : and magnify it with thanksgiving.

32. This also shall please the Lord : better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

But God hath raised up and highly exalted Him Who once was poor and in exceeding heaviness. Therefore He in His Church returns everlasting praise, and magnifies God for His mercy to His people with everlasting thanksgiving. This sacrifice God loves best—the sacrifice of thanksgiving in the memory of the sacrifice of His Christ. No victim led up struggling to His altar so pleaseth Him as cheerful praise from the mouth of His redeemed.

33. The humble shall consider this, and be glad : seek ye after God, and your soul shall live.

34. For the Lord heareth the poor : and despiseth not His prisoners.

Meditating upon His passion and His cross, the humble and penitent shall find comfort. They will see the infinite love of their Lord and be glad. They will seek for Him Whose body was broken and

Whose blood was poured out for them. They seek the bread of earth that their bodies may live, they will seek the Bread of heaven that their souls may never die. He Who was once poor heareth the poor. He Who suffered for sin despiseth not them who are tied and bound with the chain of their sins, from which they groan to be released.

35. Let heaven and earth praise Him : the sea, and all that moveth therein.

36. For God will save Sion, and build the cities of Judah : that men may dwell there, and have it in possession.

37. The posterity also of His servants shall inherit it : and they that love His Name shall dwell therein.

Therefore in His humility as in His almightiness, in His form of a servant as in His glory as a king, let all created things join in His praise and honour, both heaven, and earth, and sea, and all the dwellers therein ; for He is worthy to receive all that they can offer Him. He ever watches over and protects that second Sion, His own Church ; He builds up her cities, and leads more and more to inherit her blessings and partake her privileges. But He has not forgotten that elder Sion, nor those children of Abraham who were born after the flesh, not after the Spirit : they have stumbled, but not for ever. His prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' shall at length outweigh the doom their sins pronounced upon them. 'Blindness in

part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' So shall all, both Jew and Gentile, rejoice evermore in His mighty and unchanging love, serving Him with love in the inheritance which by His cross and passion He won for them.

This Psalm was written by David, "upon Shoshannim, or the lilies." (See note to Psalm xlv.) St. Paul also, in his quotation of verses 23, 24, Rom. xi. 10, ascribes it to David. It is a prophecy of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and therefore is appointed by the Church for Good-Friday. Few of the Psalms are more quoted in the New Testament. Part of verse 9 in St. John ii. 17, and the other part Rom. xv. 3; verses 23, 24, in Rom. xi. 10 and 2 Cor. iii. 14; and verse 25 in Acts i. 20, and St. Matth. xxiii. 38. David was doubtless inspired to write this Psalm during his own sufferings, but whether in his youth or in his age there are not sufficient grounds to decide.

PSALM lxx. *Deus in adjutorium.*

1. HASTE Thee, O God, to deliver me : make haste to help me, O Lord.

2. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul : let them be turned backward and put to confusion that wish me evil.

3. Let them for their reward be soon brought to shame : that cry over me, There, there.

'O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us.' Thus, in a world of sorrow, and opposition, and sin, is the Church compelled to cry to the Lord of all each time she begins her office

of prayer and praise. Thus does she teach her children to begin their morning and evening prayer among those many enemies both of this world and of the pit who are seeking to ruin souls, who wish evil to the righteous, and who would mock at and exult over them when they fall.

4. But let all those that seek Thee be joyful and glad in Thee : and let all such as delight in Thy salvation say alway, 'The Lord be praised.

There is joy indeed in that work of coming before God to worship Him. For them whose sins have been confessed and absolved, who have owned God to be their Father Which is in heaven, what better delight can there be than, to the Church's bidding, 'Praise ye the Lord,' to answer with a glad and willing heart, 'The Lord's Name be praised.'

5. As for me, I am poor and in misery : haste Thee unto me, O God.

6. Thou art my helper, and my redeemer : O Lord, make no long tarrying.

But they who have done what they ought not to have done, and who have left undone what they ought to have done, and who feel that they have no health in themselves, have need too of guidance and of help in coming to their Redeemer and their Lord : and this too the Church supplies to them. If we would confess our poverty and misery, and humbly crave for grace, the Church teaches us the fit words of peni-

tence and humble sorrow, no less readily than she teaches the words of thanksgiving and of praise.

"To the Chief Musician, by David, to bring to remembrance," is the title of this Psalm in the Hebrew; with which may be compared the title to Psalm xxxviii. To this the LXX. add, "for the Lord to save me," which are clearly the opening words of the first verse. The Psalm itself is almost identical with the latter part of the fortieth, verses 13—17. It was probably written by David at first as a complete Psalm, and afterwards made the conclusion to Psalm xl. by him, while it was still used in its separate form in the public service. The first verse the Church uses in the Morning and Evening Prayer. ;

Morning Prayer.

PSALM lxxi. *In Te, Domine, speravi.*

1. IN Thee, O [Lord, have I put my trust, let me never be put to confusion : but rid me, and deliver me, in Thy righteousness ; incline Thine ear unto me, and save me.

2. Be Thou my stronghold, whereunto I may alway resort : Thou hast promised to help me, for Thou art my house of defence, and my castle.

In age no less than in youth, faith and prayer are the means by which we escape distress and shame. Through them do we gain the aid of Him Who alone can save us from confusion ; through them we ask to be delivered from our many dangers in His righteousness, which is eternal—not in our own, which is less than nothing. So do we find that God and His inviting promise, 'Turn you to the stronghold,'

will be a refuge and defence that fails not when all other defences fail.

3. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the ungodly : out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.

For He Who hath delivered will again deliver all them who in prayer call to Him for deliverance. The righteous and merciful God is a most certain deliverer from all the unrighteousness and cruelty of man, and from our own faithlessness and doubts, which are more evil and cruel than any persecutor or tyrant.

4. For Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for : Thou art my hope, even from my youth.

5. Through Thee have I been holden up ever since I was born : Thou art He that took me out of my mother's womb ; my praise shall be always of Thee.

In him who has set his love on God, and whose longing is for the things of eternity, length of life increases both trust and hope. Hope grows with length of days, and becomes stronger with age, even as the flesh becomes feebler. 'The eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' Experience, which reaches even from our birth, from our first entrance into the world up to age, teaches the mighty fact of the sustaining care and the never-ceasing love of our Father in heaven. His grace

keeps an equal march with our advance in years ; surely our praise and gratitude should be, if it might be so, even with His grace.

6. I am become as it were a monster unto many : but my sure trust is in Thee.

Heb. I am become a wonder to many.

7. O let my mouth be filled with Thy praise : that I may sing of Thy glory and honour all the day long.

The believer in God often, while he 'is made a spectacle unto the world,' cannot be understood by the world ; his thoughts and ways are a marvel and a wonder to them. 'His life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion.' Their rule is, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ;' his rule is, 'Let us fast and pray, for to-morrow we die.' Their hope is for things earthly ; his for things heavenly. Their request is to have their own praise and honour before them all the day long ; his prayer is that he may have the praise of his Saviour in his mouth all the days of his life here ;—in his prosperity, because then He comforts him ; in his adversity, because then He corrects him ; when he has sinned, because then He forgives him ; when he is converted, because then He helps him ; when he has persevered, because then He will crown him.

8. Cast me not away in the time of age : forsake me not when my strength faileth me.

They who have made their Lord their hope from their youth, may most securely trust that He will not cast them away in the time of their age. It will be then, when their own strength faileth, that His strength will be shewn forth most plainly and perfectly in them. His love will never, in youth or age, forsake them whose faith forsakes not Him.

9. For mine enemies speak against me, and they that lay wait for my soul take their counsel together, saying : God hath forsaken him ; persecute him, and take him, for there is none to deliver him.

10. Go not far from me, O God : my God, haste Thee to help me.

11. Let them be confounded and perish that are against my soul : let them be covered with shame and dishonour that seek to do me evil.

The example of his Master and the history of his Master is a constant source of comfort and encouragement to the Christian in his troubles, and in the persecutions of his enemies. They said of the Lord, 'God hath forsaken Him,' and their words were utterly false and vain ; and so are they false too, when they are said of the disciple. He Who hath suffered from scorners and haters is ever near to console and to help them who suffer for His Name's sake. 'Those sinners against their own souls, who sought to do His soul evil were confounded and

perished in the evil they sought to do, and like them all shall come to shame and destruction who seek to do evil to the souls of others. Ahithophel said, 'I will arise and pursue after David, and I will come upon him while he is weary, and weak-handed, and will smite the king only;' but his evil and cruel counsel took no effect against David, but turned to his own confusion and death.

12. As for me, I will patiently abide alway : and will praise Thee more and more.

13. My mouth shall daily speak of Thy righteousness and salvation : for I know no end thereof.

14. I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God : and will make mention of Thy righteousness only.

Patient experience gives us greater knowledge of God's ways, and greater knowledge gives us greater cause for thanksgiving. Each day of our life opens to us new displays of His righteousness and salvation, and requires new acknowledgments of them from us, for they are as endless and unbounded as He is from Whom they come. 'When ye glorify the Lord, exalt Him as much as ye can; for even yet will He far exceed; and when ye exalt Him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for ye can never go far enough.' He who in his old age is weak, can yet go forth strong in his God; and if the discourse of the world has become empty

to him, and the things of time have lost their interest, he can with the more boldness talk of the righteousness of God, and make mention only of the things of eternity.

15. Thou, O God, hast taught me from my youth up until now : therefore will I tell of Thy wondrous works.

16. Forsake me not, O God, in mine old age, when I am gray-headed : until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to all them that are yet for to come.

In our youth and from our youth has God been teaching us, and grace been guiding us,—how fully, carefully, tenderly, wonderfully, we scarce can think or tell. He Himself had declared, ‘Even to your old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you : I have made, and I will bear ; even I will carry and deliver you.’ They to whom this has been fulfilled, must tell others who come after them of His patience and His power, and bid them trust in Him Who saith to each soul, even as He said to His Church, ‘Behold, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.’

17. Thy righteousness, O God, is very high : and great things are they that Thou hast done ; O God, who is like unto Thee ?

18. O what great troubles and adversities hast Thou shewed me ! and yet didst Thou

turn and refresh me : yea, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again.

19. Thou hast brought me to great honour : and comforted me on every side.

The life of every one human being on earth is full of the wonders of God's righteousness, Who dwelleth on high. Troubles and sorrows, and again after them deliverances and refreshings,—sickness and feebleness, and nearness to the grave, and then healing and safety, prosperity, and honour, and comfortings,—these are the varying changes and chances of our mortal life; and each one of them is marvellous and strange, and bids the soul ponder on the might and glory of the God Who deals so wonderfully with us creatures of dust, whom yet He has once made in His own image, and is renewing again after the likeness of His Son.

20. Therefore will I praise Thee and Thy faithfulness, O God, playing upon an instrument of musick : unto Thee will I sing upon the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel.

21. My lips will be fain when I sing unto Thee : and so will my soul whom Thou hast delivered.

22. My tongue also shall talk of Thy righteousness all the day long : for they are confounded and brought unto shame that seek to do me evil.

It is for these mercies, 'for our creation, preserva-

tion, and all the blessings of this life,' that we are bound to praise and glorify with all our powers of heart and voice that Holy One of the true Israel, Who hath made us what we are, and hath given us what we have. Our tongue must be the tuneful instrument of His praises. To Him must we sing and make melody in our hearts and in our lives. 'But above all for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory;'—this calls for the highest praise our mouth can utter, as it was the highest mercy that God could give. Of this mercy, in youth, in manhood, and in age, must we ever talk; on this love must we ever meditate, not only every day, but all the day long. For by that act of love was the righteousness of our God most fully shewn, by those means of grace is our soul delivered, and in that hope of glory are the hinderers of our salvation brought to shame.

'This Psalm, which has no title in the Hebrew, in the LXX. has the title, "By David, of the sons of Jonadab, and of those who were first made prisoners." If any authority be allowed to this title, we must suppose that this was a Psalm written by David, which was used, as particularly adapted to the circumstances of their condition, by the Rechabites, who were descended from Jonadab, (Jer. xxxv.) and the Jews who were taken by the Chaldæans as captives to Babylon. However this may be, it seems probable that David was the author of this Psalm, and that he wrote it in his extreme age, and but a little while before he died. The line which follows the next Psalm, and closes the second book, perhaps has a reference to this fact. Some of the Fathers interpret the Psalm mystically of the Church in her old age, and her trials at the end of the world.

PSALM lxxii. *Deus, judicium.*

1. GIVE the King Thy judgements, O God : and Thy righteousness unto the King's son.

2. Then shall he judge Thy people according unto right : and defend the poor.

3. The mountains also shall bring peace : and the little hills righteousness unto the people.

4. He shall keep the simple folk by their right : defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong doer.

Solomon became the king over Israel, the son of David whom Samuel anointed to be king. To him, at his prayer, God 'gave an understanding heart to judge His people, that he might discern between good and bad.' In his reign there was peace and justice throughout all his land ; upon 'high and low, rich and poor;' the dwellers in the strongholds of the mountains were brought to submission ; the inhabitants of the plains were governed in equity and truth ; his very name is interpreted 'the Prince of peace.' He judged the people, and his people saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment. But there was to be a more glorious king than Solomon ; a son of David was to sit on his throne, of Whom Solomon and his wisdom, and riches, and power, was but the type and shadow, a Prince of everlasting peace—the Son of God Who was even 'one with the Father,' Whose kingdom should have

no end, to Whom was given all judgment, and all authority and power, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

5. They shall fear Thee, as long as the sun and moon endureth : from one generation to another.

6. He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool : even as the drops that water the earth.

Heb. He shall come down like rain on the mown grass.

7. In his time shall the righteous flourish : yea, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth.

Behold a greater than Solomon is here ! The reign of Solomon over Israel was for forty years only ; but while heaven and earth should stand, while the sun and moon should endure, He Who was the Sun of righteousness was to be with His Church as King and Lord, even unto the end of the world. She was to fear Him and obey His law ; and His heavenly grace, ‘the continual dew of His blessing,’ was to descend upon her and her members, giving life and strength and fruitfulness, as the rain cometh down upon the mown grass, or as the dew fell upon the fleece of Gideon. Through Him shall they that are His be accounted righteous ; and in Him shall His people find peace, both in time and when time shall be no more. They shall find that peace which passeth all understanding in His Church on earth, and they

shall pass from His Church here into the unending peace of His Church above.

8. His dominion shall be also from the one sea to the other : and from the flood unto the world's end.

9. They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before him : his enemies shall lick the dust.

‘Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms from the river Euphrates unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents and served Solomon all the days of his life.’ But Christ's kingdom shall be wider far. It shall extend from sea to sea, and not be bounded even by the ends of the earth, or by the limits of time, for ‘His kingdom shall have no end.’ They who have dwelt in the parched wilderness of ignorance and sin shall feel the might of His love, and fall down upon their knees and worship Him. They who were once His enemies, and would not so much as bow down their heads in His presence, shall hide their faces in the earth before Him, in adoration of His mercy and His holiness.

10. The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents : the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts.

11. All kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall do him service.

‘All the earth sought a sight of Solomon, to hear

his wisdom which God had put in his heart: and they brought every man his present, vessels of silver and vessels of gold.' The Queen of Sheba came from the utmost part of the earth to hear his wisdom, and to see his glory. And so the wise men came from the east to worship the Son of David Who was born King of the Jews, and they went to Bethlehem where He was, 'and when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.' They presented themselves also unto Him. They were the firstfruits of the Gentiles, the forerunners of the nations, peoples, and languages, who should confess Him as King of kings and Lord of lords, and bring before Him their tribute of obedience, and worship, and praise.

12. For he shall deliver the poor when he crieth: the needy also, and him that hath no helper.

13. He shall be favourable to the simple and needy: and shall preserve the souls of the poor.

14. He shall deliver their souls from falsehood and wrong: and dear shall their blood be in his sight.

He Who was Lord of all came poor to save the poor. He it is in truth Who 'delivereth the poor that crieth, and the fatherless, and him that hath

no helper.' His call was, 'Come unto Me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' His judgment was, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' His title was, 'The Preserver of men.' So precious were their souls in His sight, that He gave His blood to save them,—to save them from falsehood and sin, and to save them from eternal death.

15. He shall live, and unto him shall be given of the gold of Arabia : prayer shall be made ever unto him, and daily shall he be praised.

His power is eternal as Himself. That which was said in flattery to other kings shall be said in truth to Him—'O King, live for ever.' For He saith, 'I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death.' Whatever is most precious and most pure shall be offered to Him as a fitting tribute. 'Thy kingdom come' shall be the prayer that shall continually be made before Him. Day by day shall He be magnified, and His Name shall be worshipped world without end.

16. There shall be an heap of corn in the earth, high upon the hills : his fruit shall shake like Libanus, and shall be green in the city like grass upon the earth.

Heb. There shall be abundance of corn in the earth,

Even upon the tops of the mountains :

Its fruit shall shake like Lebanon.

They of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth.

17. His Name shall endure for ever ; his Name shall remain under the sun among the posterities : which shall be blessed through him ; and all the heathen shall praise him.

In the reign of Solomon, God's grace was shewn in blessing the smallest quantity of seed in the barrenest soil unto a most bounteous harvest. Then 'Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea, eating and drinking, and making merry.' In the kingdom of Christ, His people, which is the true Israel, shall be very many in number. The seed which He went forth to sow shall bring forth in them the fruit of good works a hundred-fold. The earth shall be covered with the knowledge and fear of the Lord, even to the tops of the mountains. The wheat of the righteous shall grow in His field strong and tall, waving to and fro with its heavy ears, like the cedars upon Lebanon. The inhabitants of the city of God, that is, His Church, shall be countless in their number, like the blades of grass which grow upon the face of the earth. His Name, which is bright with a glory beyond all created light, shall be hallowed for ever, and all the generations of them that believe on it shall be saved. As the Jews of old blessed in the name of Solomon, saying, The Lord make thee like unto Solomon ; so to be called a Christian, 'and to be made like unto Christ,' is a name of still higher blessing which can never be lost. For in Him is fulfilled to the uttermost the promise made to Abraham,—'In thy seed shall all the nations of the world be blessed.' He Who is the salvation

of all, both of Jew and Gentile, shall receive glory, and honour, and praise from all the children of men.

18. Blessed be the Lord God, even the God of Israel : Which only doeth wondrous things ;

19. And blessed be the Name of His Majesty for ever : and all the earth shall be filled with His Majesty. Amen, Amen.

To that eternal and All-wise God, Who sent His only-begotten Son into the world, to redeem the world and bring us to His light and truth, be given praise, and blessing, and glory, both now and for ever. He hath done that which He spake to Moses, saying, 'I have pardoned according to thy word : but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.' May His everlasting counsel be ever more and more accomplished, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Heb. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Thus with the full assurance of a coming Saviour, a King mightier than all the kings of the earth, Who should sit upon his throne and rule in perfect righteousness, does David end his enraptured and inspired prayers. As in the Saviour his prayers were ended, so in the Saviour were they fulfilled. 'Now these be the last words of David, of David the son of Jesse, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob and the

sweet psalmist of Israel, by whom the Spirit of the Lord spake, and His word was in his tongue.'

This Psalm, according to the title, was written "by Solomon," and it is full of references to the circumstances of his life and the character of his reign, (compare 1 Kings iii., iv., x.). But it has been acknowledged by the ancient Jewish commentators, as well as taught by the Christian Fathers, that this Psalm in its higher and spiritual meaning is prophetic of the Messiah, and is to be referred to Him. That Solomon was a type of Christ is plain from the Canticles, but he was still further a type in his being the son of David and the king of Israel—in the peace of his reign—in the heathens submitting themselves to him—in his wisdom and justice,—and in his building the Temple. Our Lord Himself seems to teach us this in St. Luke xi. 31. The last line, which declares that the prayers of David are ended, and which in the Hebrew concludes this book, does not imply that no other prayer-psalms of David existed, but that those which are contained in this book had been collected under the directions of Hezekiah, and were to be used according to their original design in the temple-service, and that the psalms which followed these, and are contained in the next book, were not the composition of David. Though this notice is appended to a psalm which, like the hundred and twenty-seventh, was written by Solomon, yet it may well have been looked upon as a psalm of David, both as being written by his son, and as embodying the hopes and assurances of David, which were founded on the promises made to him. The songs of Solomon were a thousand and five,* (1 Kings iv. 32), but of them only these two psalms and the book of Canticles have been preserved in the Holy Scriptures.





